Rivalry and Tribute

Society and Ritual in a Telugu Village in South India

Bruce Elliot Tapper

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NOTE ON THE TRANSLITERATION OF TELUGU WORDS

Readers unfamiliar with Indian languages need not concern themselves with most of the diacritical marks used here to indicate transliteration from the spelling of a word in the Telugu alphabet. One letter that may cause some confusion is *c*—pronounced either 'ts' (in front of *a*, *ā*, *o*, *ō*, *u*, and *ū*) or 'ch' (in front of *e*, *ē*, *i*, *ī*, and vowel like the 'a' in 'man' for which there is no letter but is often written as *ā*). Thus *cākali* sounds like 'tsakali' and *cinna* sounds like 'chinna'. Sounds resembling the English 'sh' are represented by *ś* (halfway between English 's' and 'sh') and *ṣ* (pronounced farther back in the mouth, like the 'sh' in the word 'shoe'). The short *a* (in contrast to the long *ā*) is pronounced like the 'u' in 'mud'.

Telugu plurals are generally formed by adding *-lu* or *-ḷḷu* (*paṇḍuga*, 'festival'/*paṇḍugalu* 'festivals'; *kannu*, 'eye'/*kaḷḷu*, 'eyes'). In the text, whenever an *s* has been placed at the end of a transliterated Telugu word, it has been used only to give the word an English plural sense (*pūja*/*pūjas*); *s* never occurs at the end of words in Telugu speech.

Telugu speakers freely add or drop a 'y' sound before vowels at the beginning of words (*ekkaḍa*/*yekkaḍa*, 'where?') to make them easier to pronounce but this does not alter their meaning. The Telugu alphabet has no distinction between upper and lower case letters. Where these occur in italicised transliterated words it is merely for the sake of English spelling conventions, such as at the beginning of a sentence. Names and words commonly known in their Anglicised spelling are given in place of their Telugu equivalents (Lord Rama instead of *śrī rāmuḍu*).

For readers who are familiar with Indian languages it is worth pointing out that the Telugu alphabet has corresponding letters for all letters in the Devanagari alphabet used for Hindi and Sanskrit. This includes letters distinguishing aspirated and unaspirated consonants (the aspiration being transliterated by an 'h' : *d*/*dh*; *t*/*th*); dental and retroflex consonants (the retroflex giving the quality of an American 'r' sound, is indicated by a dot beneath the letter : *d*/*ḍ*; *t*/*ṭ*); and short and long vowels (long vowels indicated by a line above the letter : *a*/*ā*; *i*/*ī*). Among points of difference

with Hindi or Sanskrit are the existence in Telugu of a contrast between certain short and long vowels (*e*/*ē*; *o*/*ō*); the Sanskrit versions are always considered long. Telugu interprets the diphthongs *au* and *ai* as short though they are considered long in Sanskrit.

Finally, Telugu words often end with an *m* (or have an *m* between two vowels). In these cases the 'm' is pronounced without completely closing the lips, producing the impression of a mild, nasalised 'w' sound. In printed books, the final *m* is sometimes followed by the vowel *u* (*pustakam*, 'book' can also be written *pustakamu*) which is, however, never pronounced in everyday speech unless a reference is intended to the reading of a printed word. Except for bibliographic references, such final *u* has been omitted in our transcription.

PART I

VILLAGE SOCIETY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE VILLAGE AND ITS REGION

My aim in this book is to throw light on the relationship between social structure and ritual in a Hindu village in coastal Andhra Pradesh, South India. The material I present is the result of a twenty-three month research effort in the field, between October 1970 and August 1972. During that time I observed home life, agricultural activities, and an astonishing variety of ceremonial events. I also conducted a house by house census which enumerated not only population but also land ownership, cash crop sales, loans, and relationships with servant castes.

I guided my data collection by an interest in the symbolisation of power relations that developed out of research I had done on village goddesses in a village near Hyderabad city in 1967. In that work I had been struck by the patron-client idiom in which relations with deities seemed to be expressed. I felt that if only I knew a great deal more about the social context, such as relationships of authority and dependency, I would be able to reveal a logic underlying the elaborate rituals which I had observed.

Three major anthropological thinkers have influenced my approach, Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz and Abner Cohen, a teacher of mine at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Turner's detailed case studies identifying the inherent conflicts in Ndembu social structure and relating religious ritual to these conflicts set a high standard to which I aspired in my own fieldwork (Turner 1968: 279-98). Geertz's interpretation of ritual as both 'model of' actual social realities and 'model for' idealised behaviour (Geertz 1966a) was a key concept in my initial hypothesis that there was an interplay between ritual and society. Cohen's teaching that ritual symbols are used to organise interest groups and express rivalries between competitors led to my investigation of the social background when controversies over ritual events arose during field work.

My research hypothesis proved a fruitful one, though I discarded the

'patron-client' model as inadequate to deal with indigenous categories of social relationships. A careful examination of power relations in society revealed several distinct spheres of authority and social units in which mutual responsibility rather than hierarchy was a value. The primary ones were the nuclear family, the lineage segment, the sub-clan, the clan, the caste, and the settlement. And far from being static structures, these revealed a surprising lack of consensus within them and rivalry between them. Wives constantly posed challenges to their husband's dominance in domestic economic affairs and disputes and also played a major role in the high degree of marital instability and divorce. Brothers pursued their own household's interests to the detriment of their co-operation with each other. Between castes, economic relations did not always conform to a strictly hierarchical pattern. The caste hierarchy itself was a mass of discrepant, unreciprocated claims.

In the face of these rivalries and contradictory pressures it was ritual activity which defined and upheld the formal conventions of social hierarchy and obligation. It achieved this through constant repetition of ritualistic tribute, symbols of respect, and in the principal ceremonial activity, *pūja*. This symbolic enactment of hierarchy was presented through rituals as the epitome of morality itself. The subordinate role of wives was similarly defined by ritual concepts. Ritual symbolism defined a wife who is subordinated to her husband as virtuous and auspicious. It defined a woman who became a widow, no longer subordinate to an elder male, as inauspicious. Ritual pollution associated with death and funerary customs helped delineate kin and clan boundaries. Ritual activities in the major agricultural festivals fostered idealised models of inter-caste co-operation by activating responsibilities for castes to participate interdependently. They were also the occasions on which numerous political and economic rivalries boiled up to the surface. Even so, the rituals required narrow status-seeking groups to acknowledge wide social obligations and responsibilities before their competitive aims could gain legitimacy.

This book is arranged in three parts, one that defines village society, another that examines its ritual life, and a third that discusses the dynamic interplay between society and ritual.

After an introduction to the village and its region in Chapter 1 there is an examination of village society. In Chapter 2 the relations within the Gavara caste are considered, followed by an analysis of relations between castes in the village of Aripaka. In both cases normative social structures are contrasted with the inherent tensions and rivalries in the political and economic arenas. This is followed by a summary of the principal findings. An introduction to ritual in Chapter 3 explains some of the fundamental concepts encountered in the subsequent chapters. It is here that *pūja* is

explained as a form of symbolic tribute. There follow the chapters describing the ritual life of the village. These are arranged in several main topics: life-cycle rites (Chapter 4), calendrical celebrations, agricultural ceremonies, and emergency exorcisms (Chapters 5-6). The ways ritual occasions are used to express various sorts of rivalries are considered in Chapter 7. This final chapter concludes with an assessment of the role of ritual in the creation of ideal social categories and moral attitudes, in addition to its use as a tactical weapon in competition.

BACKGROUND ON THE REGION

Social and Cultural Regions of Andhra Pradesh

Contemporary Andhra Pradesh (1971 population: 43,502,708) consists of three distinctive regions, Telangana, Rayalaseema, and Coastal Andhra. Each of these has its own characteristic terrain, history and Telugu dialect. Telangana, the most economically depressed region, was heavily influenced by the Urdu-speaking Muslim elite which formerly administered it as part of the erstwhile Hyderabad State. Rayalaseema, south of Telangana, suffers from lying in a region of chronically low reliability of rainfall. It seems to have done rather better than Telangana in terms of economic development, apparently because of its long ties with the British administration in Madras.

Coastal Andhra, also formerly part of the Madras Presidency, is the most economically developed region of the state. It owes much of this prosperity to the irrigation works of the nineteenth century in the deltas of the Krishna and Godavari rivers. These areas were transformed from drought-stricken backwaters into populous and lushly fertile tracts. Behind the deltas and extending the entire length of the coast is the tank-irrigated 'upland' area. Visakhapatnam District, the focus of this study, lies entirely inside this upland region.

Within Coastal Andhra, the geographical insulation of the Eastern Ghats facilitated the separation of the two northern districts of Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam from the rest of the region for several centuries. The effects of this historical separation linger on in the local Telugu dialects which change rather abruptly around the border between the present Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts (Krishnamurti 1962 : 127). Local inhabitants continue to refer to each other as 'westerners' and 'easterners' on the basis of these differences. Notwithstanding this, northern Coastal Andhra Pradesh is notable for its linguistic and religious homogeneity. While the percentage of Telugu speakers for the state as a whole is 86%, in Visakhapatnam District the percentage is 99.9%. The rural areas of Visakhapatnam District similarly have the smallest percent-

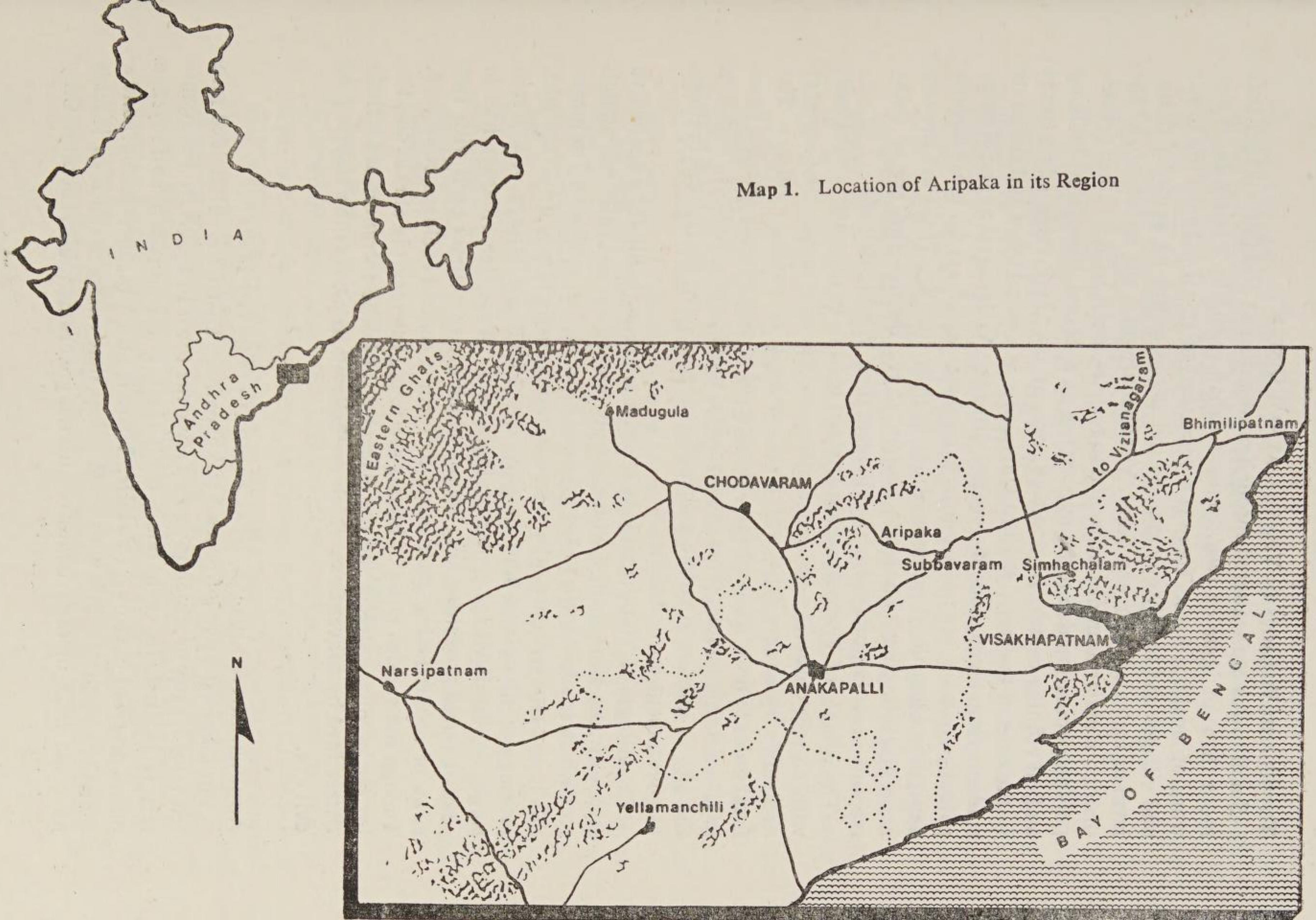
age of Muslims of any district in the state (Hindus 99%, Muslims 0.7%, Christians 0.3%) (Sekhar 1966 : 182). The district's total population in 1971 was 3,805,366.

The configurations of dominant caste regions differ considerably within Coastal Andhra. Reddys, found elsewhere throughout the state and prominent in southern Coastal Andhra and the Krishna Delta, hardly appear at all in the rural areas of Visakhapatnam. Kammas, frequently dominant in villages of the Krishna delta and surrounding regions, seem primarily localised in those areas. By contrast, Kapus and Velamas are often found as dominant castes in both the deltas and Visakhapatnam-Srikakulam. The Gavara caste which features prominently in this study resembles the Kammas in that it is concentrated in a single particular region, in this case the Visakhapatnam District.

Geography and Economy of Visakhapatnam District

Visakhapatnam District, the locale of this study, consists of a terrain of gently sloping plains interspersed with hills. Striking features of the landscape are the irregularly shaped hills, the red soil, the villages of conical palm-leaf thatched huts, and the extraordinary abundance of palmyra palm trees. Rainfall in the district is fairly reliable and the prosperity of the district's agriculture ranks midway in the State between the less fertile Deccan and the river-irrigated delta regions. The main source of irrigation here is the tank, a type of reservoir which is formed behind an earthenwork dam. Complex systems of dams skilfully collect rainwater which would otherwise flow off the hills or down the sloping plains unused. Higher ground rising up near the base of the hills tends to be green and appear forest-covered all year round. The heavily forested ridges of the Eastern Ghats, which lie in the interior in a line parallel to the coastal plain, contain low-density tribal populations who are culturally and linguistically distinct from the Hindu villagers of the plains.

On the plains, the driest areas are used for the cultivation of groundnuts, beans, and gram crops as well as the occasional grove of mangoes or cashews. Lower lying sparsely irrigated areas are used for the staple millet crops (*gaṇṭi* and *cōḷu*). Once the millet crops are harvested, these same plots are utilised for vegetables (onions, aubergines, ladies' fingers, chillies etc.) and tobacco for domestic consumption. The highly prized lands lying below irrigation dams, the so-called wet lands, are used for growing rice and the major cash crop of the region, sugar-cane. The sugar-cane producing region of the district is a clearly defined zone centring on the towns of Anakapalli[1], Chodavaram, and Yellamanchili (see Map 1) where there is a concentration of sugar refineries and a large wholesale inter-state export market for jaggery.



Map 1. Location of Aripaka in its Region

Towns and Villages in Visakhapatnam District

Small towns are scattered throughout the district and few villages take more than an hour or two from an urban centre by a fairly dense network of local bus lines. There is a great deal of travel between the towns and villages and hardly any area on the plains could be considered isolated or insulated from any other. Visakhapatnam is the metropolis of the district, a major administrative and industrial centre with a rather cosmopolitan population due to its importance as a Naval base, ship-building and oil refining centre. In addition, one of the three main educational institutions of the state, Andhra University, is located there and draws its students from throughout the coastal districts. Vizianagaram and Anakapalli, by contrast, are important urban centres which are far more directly dependent upon the rural populations in their vicinity. These are the two main marketing and wholesale centres of the district and are in many respects more important for the villagers than Visakhapatnam.

The villages of Visakhapatnam District tend to be nucleated settlements with closely clustering houses. Settlements are often associated together as a single 'revenue village' with a shared body of political officers. The focal point of most main villages, as opposed to subordinate satellite hamlets, is a Rama temple. This usually has a roofed open platform which is the site of numerous public gatherings ranging from festival celebrations to government tax collection.

The villages of Visakhapatnam District are remarkable for a distinctive style of house construction with a steeply pitched conical palm-leaf thatch roof which reaches down to the ground. Most typical settlements combine this house-type with two others, free-standing single family dwellings with rectangular floorplans, and long houses which are strings of adjacent single family dwellings under a single roof. Wealthier villagers live in cement versions of these long houses which are sometimes built with two rows of rooms facing each other to form a central enclosed courtyard. Though the various types of houses are found interspersed at random, the lay-out of village streets and the placement of house entrances are strictly determined by conventions which are believed to prevent the trapping of evil eye.

Administrative and Political Structures in the District

For administrative purposes Visakhapatnam District is subdivided into ten taluks, each of which is named after the town in which its headquarters is located. In each taluk town there is a land record and revenue office, presided over by a *tahsildār*. There is also a magistrate court and a police headquarters. It is with these offices that villagers and their leaders have the bulk of their contacts with the government bureaucracy. Only

judicial appeals or business of an unusually important nature are referred to the district headquarters in Visakhapatnam town, the seat of the district Collectorate. The number of villages under the jurisdiction of a single taluk is remarkably small, 136 in the case of Anakapalli Taluk. This means that the Headman (*munasabu* or *munsif*) and Record Keeper (*karṇam*) of each village maintain fairly frequent personal contact with the administrative officers of the State government.

A second bureaucratic hierarchy, autonomous from the Taluk-Collectorate system, links the villages with the State government. This is the Panchayat system. In addition to having a Headman and Record Keeper, responsible for collecting annual revenue and maintaining the peace, each village has a Panchayat President (*presiḍenṭu* or *sarpanc*) and Vice-President (*vaisu-presiḍenṭu, upa-sarpanc*) intended to represent the village democratically and administer development programmes. These men are chosen by a vote taken among those elected to represent the various wards in the village (always an odd number) on the village panchayat or council. For administration of the Panchayat system each Taluk is divided into two Blocks. In each Block headquarters, there are offices of the Block Development Officer (B.D.O., *bīḍīyō*) and the Panchayati Samiti, a council of all the heads of village councils. The Panchayati Samiti elects a President from among its members to represent them at the district level council in Visakhapatnam town, the Zilla Parishad.

Though the Panchayat system, introduced after Indian independence, was intended to encourage village self-government, it has tended to overlap ambiguously with the older headman system. As we shall presently see in our study, its principal effects have been to introduce new loci of political power and recurrent possibilities of competition for them. The Panchayat hierarchy is also an important line of communication in the mobilization of political support at the time of state and national elections.

The Gavara Caste in the Visakhapatnam District

The Gavara caste is found in greatest concentration in the region of Anakapalli town and is roughly coextensive with the sugar-cane cultivation belt which stretches west to Yellamanchili, north to Chodavaram, and northwest to Madugula and Narsipatnam. There are particularly dense concentrations along the Sarada river which is an important local irrigation source supporting unusually large prosperous villages along its banks. Gavara urban neighbourhoods are found in Anakapalli in the quarter known as Gavarapalem, and in Visakhapatnam town in the quarters of Alipuram, Marripalem, and Gopalapatnam. There are also small communities of Gavaras in the towns of Vizianagaram and Srung-

avarapukota. A remarkable feature of the areas of heaviest Gavara rural concentration is that Gavaras by no means control or dominate all the villages. Villages in which Kapus and Velamas are dominant are interspersed with the Gavara villages. In addition there are villages where particular castes dominate which are not normally found to do so on any wide scale, such as weavers or shepherds (Sali, Golla, respectively). Despite this pattern of heterogeneity of castes which are dominant in individual villages, the Gavaras dominate the region as a whole. This seems to be the product of their overall economic dominance in the sugarcane economy and their strategic influence in the largest most prosperous villages.

Other Influential Castes of Visakhapatnam District

For the last three hundred years Rajus, styling themselves Kshatriyas, have wielded much regional authority over the agriculturalist castes mentioned above. Historically, Visakhapatnam District was frequently peripheral to the large kingdoms of the Deccan and Orissa. Consequently, at times of weak central control, petty warriors were able to establish small principalities around their fortified towns. Local dynasties at the towns of Oddadi (Vaddadi, near Chodavaram) and Yellamanchili are recorded in inscriptions made from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries at the Simhachalam temple (Sundaram 1969 : 25-26).

Even when there was direct control from Golkonda, the area was sufficiently remote to allow local administrators to amass substantial autonomy and power. Such was the case of a family of Rajus who migrated to the present Srikakulam District in the mid-seventeenth century as commanders of auxiliary forces for the Kutb Shahi rulers (Richards 1978 : 55). They expanded their territorial control from their original military grants, until by the late eighteenth century, based in Vizianagaram town, they controlled three quarters of the villages and revenue of the trans-Godavari region (*ibid.* : 65).

Though the British gradually usurped their military power, the Rajas of Vizianagaram survived as powerful zamindars. To this day they are referred to by villagers as Maharajas and are remembered for their fulfilment of traditional royal prerogatives: tank building, charitable maintenance of schools, support of Brahman villages, and patronage of the revered Brahmanical temple of Sri Varaha Narasimha Swamy at Simhachalam. Not only was the Simhachalam temple administration headed by a relative of the family priests of the Raju rulers (Sundaram 1969 : 89) but its offices were, until recently, in the Maharaja's fort in Vizianagaram town (*ibid.* : 105), some forty-five kilometres from the actual temple.

Since Independence, the influence of the Rajus and the other high

castes—the Brahmans and Komatis—has declined. This is due to the government's deliberate democratization of political and economic opportunities. While those policies may have been intended for the most depressed, Harijan castes, it was the farmers who have been best placed to benefit from the new opportunities. The high castes are nevertheless still active on the political scene. For instance the former Maharaja of Vizianagaram ran successfully for the post of Member of Parliament in the Mid-Term Poll for the national Lok Sabha in March 1971. Subsequently, a prominent local politician, who was a Brahman, was elected Member of the State Legislative Assembly in the 1972 General Election. Soon afterwards he was appointed Minister for Education in the State Government. While it would be a misrepresentation to imply that electioneering and voting run along caste lines, it is nevertheless true that members of the higher castes participate in the political competition with the advantages of higher levels of education and experience in dealing with governmental structures.

THE VILLAGE

The Settlement of Yatapalem in Aripaka Revenue Village

The settlement of Yatapalem (*yātapālem*) was chosen for study because of its average size, typical appearance, multicaste composition (see Table 1), dominant Gavara caste, and economic ties with the town of Anakapalli. It lies between two ridges of hills in a funnel-shaped valley which gradually slopes eastwards down towards its wider end (see Map 1). A main road runs along this plain and frequent bus services running on it link the village to the towns of Chodavaram (16 km), Anakapalli (22 km), and Visakhapatnam (40 km). The village is irrigated in the customary fashion by a series of irrigation reservoirs, tanks, fed by intermittent streams when rain flows down the gradually sloping plain and off the nearby hills. These sources of water are supplemented by a number of large open wells and together they irrigate some 350 acres of wet lands (37%) of the total of 930 acres cultivated. Uncultivated wastelands around the hills and other barren uplands comprise an additional 1,667 acres within the village boundaries.

While Yatapalem, whose population is 904, appears geographically a distinct settlement, it is actually only one component of a grouping of settlements (see Maps 2 through 5) associated together as the 'revenue village' of Aripaka (*āripāka*). This unit, with a composite population of 1,713, is a single entity from the point of view of the government administration. It shares a single set of village officers (Headman, Record Keeper, Village Servant, Panchayat President, Panchayat Vice-President) and

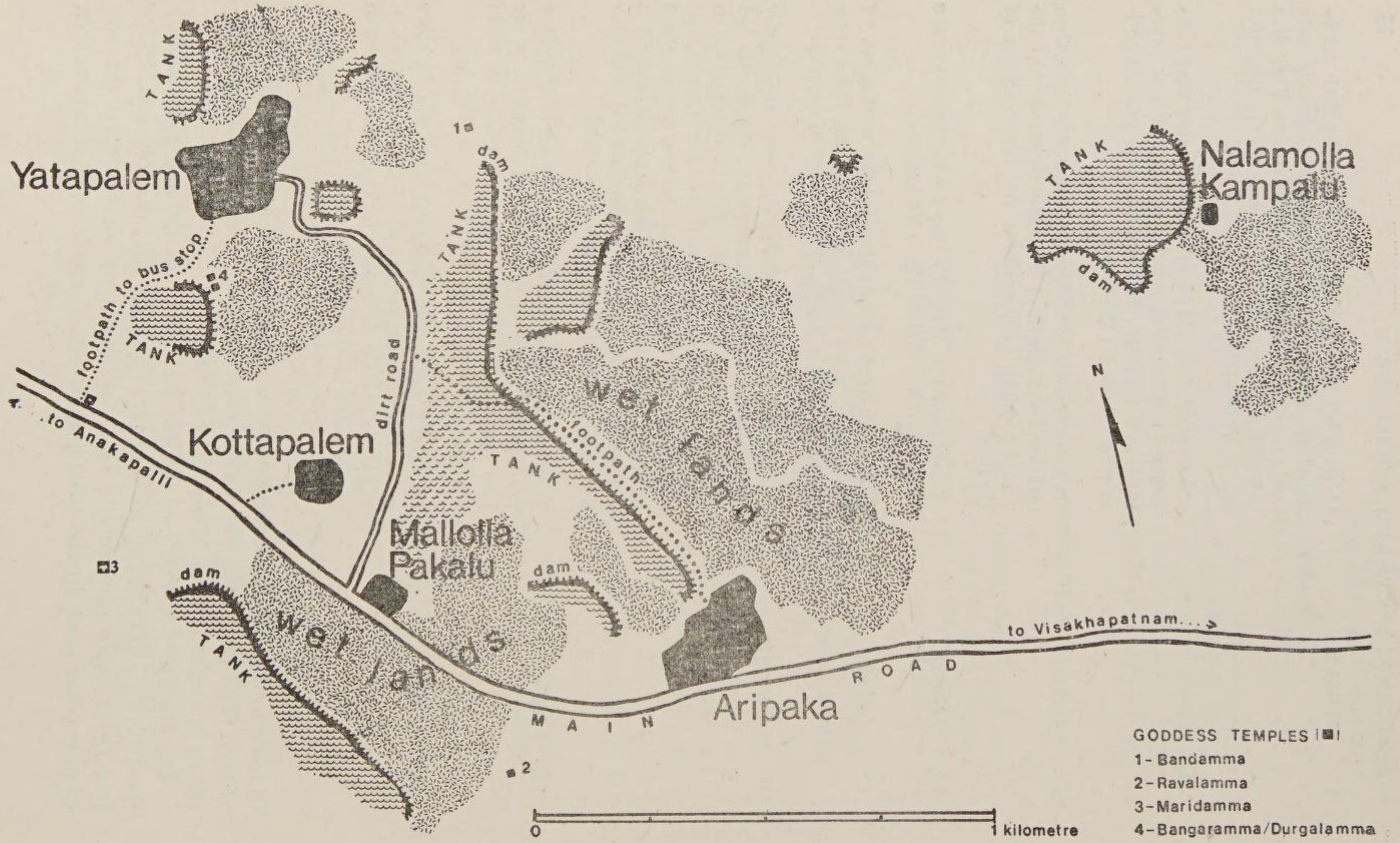
TABLE 1 : CASTES OF ARIPAKA REVENUE VILLAGE

	Caste	*Description*
1.	*Brahman*	(Sub-caste: *Pradhama Śākha Niyōgi*) They live entirely in Aripaka, are landowners and village bureaucrats, but are not from Brahman sub-castes which perform priestly functions (the latter have to be brought in from outside).
2.	*Rāju*	They are landlords who live exclusively in Aripaka and call themselves Kshatriyas.
3.	*Kōmaṭi*	(Sub-caste: *Gauri Kōmaṭi* or *Gavara Kōmaṭi*) They are merchants and shopkeepers calling themselves Vaisyas. Some own lands. Most reside in Aripaka but there is a family which maintains a shop in Yatapalem that lives there.
4.	*Golla*	(Also called *Yadava* or *Konārlu*) They are traditional shepherds and farmers. This caste is only represented by a school teacher who lives in Aripaka.
5.	*Gavara*	They are the dominant farmer caste of the village. Almost all are small landowners, living primarily in Yatapalem and the roadside satellite settlement of Mallolla Pakalu, but a few families also reside in Aripaka.
6.	*Kāpu*	They are another major farmer caste of the region, here represented only in Aripaka.
7.	*Pedda Kāpu*	They are a Kapu sub-caste (which does not intermarry with the Kapus of Aripaka), represented by two households in Yatapalem.
8.	*Velama*	(Sub-caste: *Koppu Velama*) They are the third major farmer caste of the region (besides the Gavaras and Kapus). In the village they reside primarily in Aripaka but are also found in the outlying satellite settlement of Nalamolla Kampalu.
9.	*Kamsāli*	(Also call themselves *Brahmam*) They are the carpenters, blacksmiths and goldsmiths of the village, living equally divided between Yatapalem and Aripaka (with more carpentry and heavy blacksmithing in Yatapalem and more goldsmithing in Aripaka).
10.	*Jangam*	(Also called *Ayyavārlu*) They traditionally served as *pūjāris* (ritual officiants) of village Rama temples and as performers of Shaivite funerary rituals. Nowadays they frequently make their living as tailors. They reside mainly in Yatapalem but there is one household in Aripaka also.

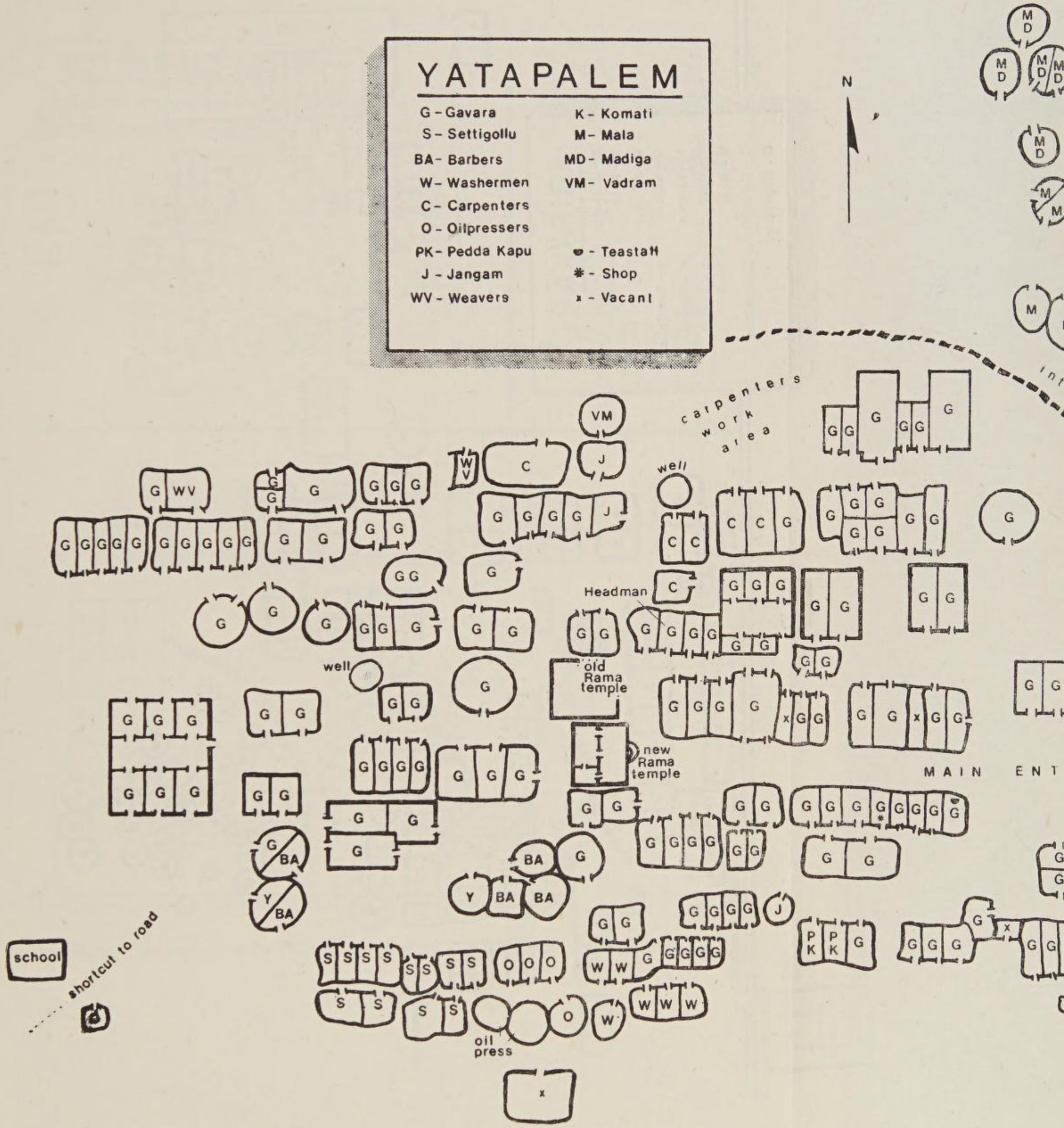
11.	*Telukula*	(Also called *Telaga*) They mainly practise their traditional occupation of oil-pressing but also cultivate land of their own or work for the farmers. They live in both Yatapalem and Aripaka with the larger contingent in Yatapalem.
12.	*Sāli*	(Also called *Padmasāli*) Traditionally they were weavers and in other villages in the region they still practise that occupation. In Yatapalem they provide agricultural labour for the farmers.
13.	*Vaḍram*	Only one household of this caste is found in Yatapalem and serve as *pūjāris* for the rituals concerned with the village goddess. They work for the farmers most of the time.
14.	*Maṅgaḷi*	(Sub-caste: *Kāpu Mangali*) They are the barbers of the village and live exclusively in Yatapalem.
15.	*Cākali*	(Sub-caste: *Kāpu Cākali*) They are the washermen of the village, living mainly in Yatapalem. There are a few households in Kottapalem and one in Aripaka.
16.	*Seṭṭigoḷḷu*	(Mainly called *Yāta* by others) They were traditionally toddy tappers, makers of palm wine. Prohibition led to abandonment of that craft, though its repeal led to their distilling rum from local sugar-cane. They depend mainly on day labour for the farmers, supplemented by basket and mat weaving. Their largest population is in the satellite settlement of Kottapalem but some also live in Yatapalem (which bears their name).
17.	*Māla*	They are one of the two major Harijan castes of Andhra Pradesh, living primarily in Aripaka though there are also some in Yatapalem. They are one of the main sources of labour for the farmers.
18.	*Mādiga*	(Also call selves *Ādi Āndhrulu*) They are the other major Harijan caste, living exclusively in Yatapalem. They are mainly labourers for the farmers, but also pound palmyra palm fiber for rope.

in numerous ways its inhabitants share a feeling of belonging to the same village. The issue is complex since there remain ways in which the settlements evidence individual identities as well.

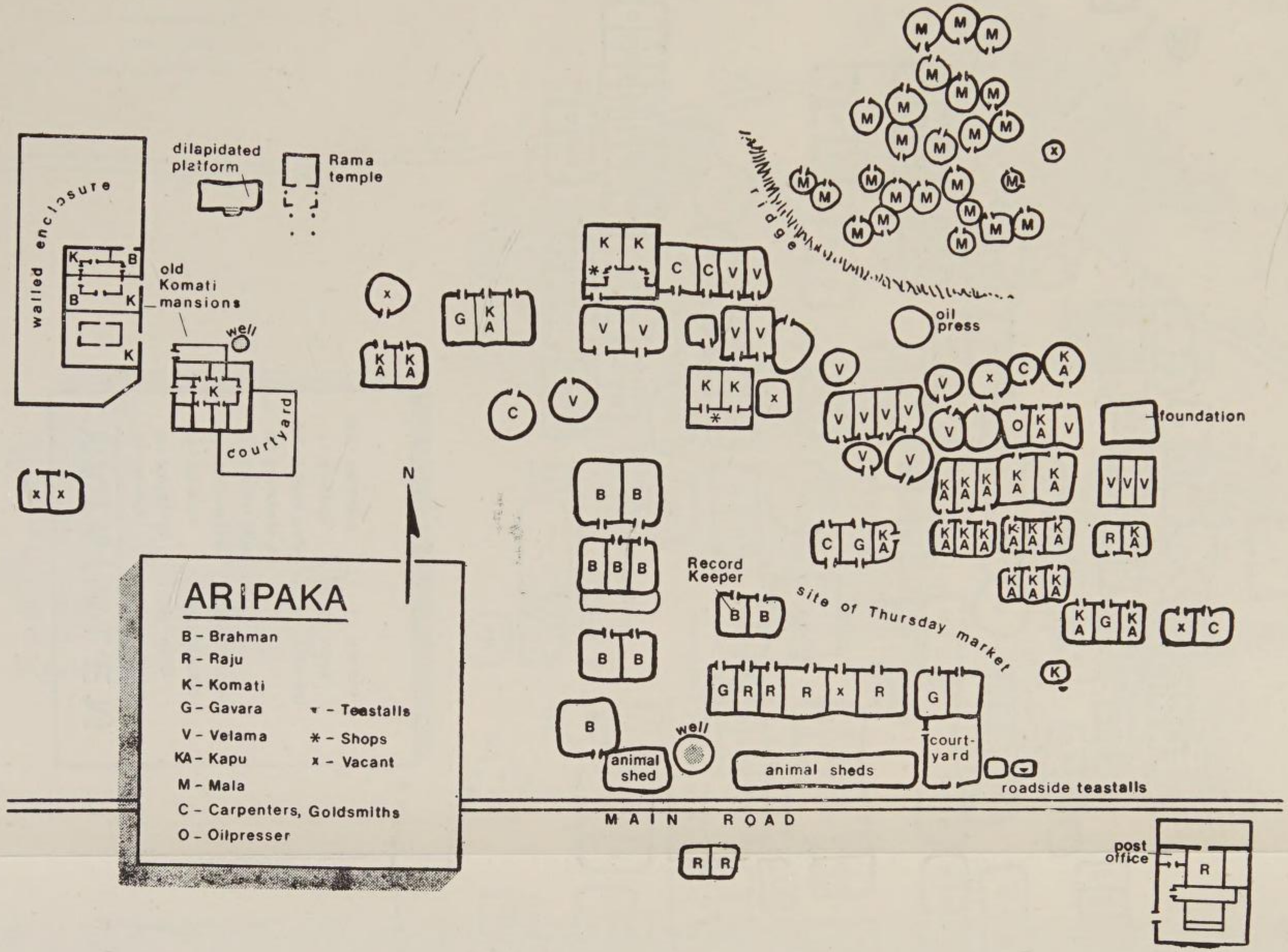
The Gavaras form 65% of the Yatapalem population and only slightly less than 50% of the population of the composite Aripaka Revenue Village (see Table 2). In addition, the Gavaras are more than four times the size of any other caste in the total population. From Table 3 it can be seen



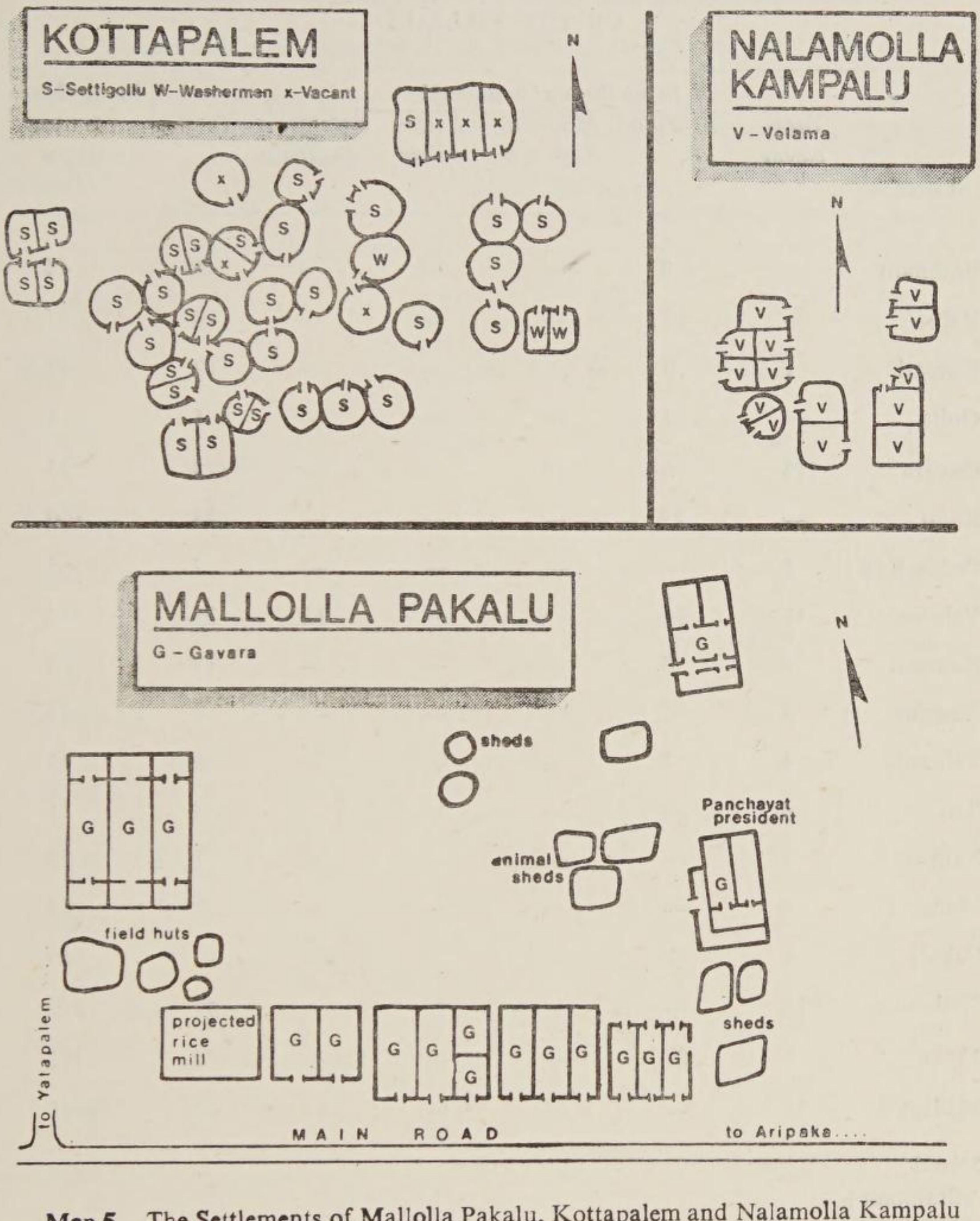
Map 2. The Settlements of Aripaka Revenue Village



Map 3. The Settlements of Yatapalem



Map 4. The Settlements of Aripaka



Map 5. The Settlements of Mallolla Pakalu, Kottapalem and Nalamolla Kampalu

TABLE 2: CASTE DISTRIBUTION AMONG SETTLEMENTS OF THE VILLAGE

Caste	*In numbers of households*						*In numbers of population (Total)*
	Yata-palem	*Aripaka*	*Mallolla Kampalu*	*Kotta-palem*	*Nalamolla Kampalu*	*Total*	
Brahman	—	8	—	—	—	8	44
Raju	—	10	—	—	—	10	47
Komati	1	9	—	—	—	10	40
Golla	—	1	—	—	—	1	6
Gavara	148	6	19	—	—	173	795
Kapu	—	23	—	—	—	23	100
Pedda Kapu	2	—	—	—	—	2	5
Velama	1	16	—	—	12	29	162
Kamsali	6	6	—	—	—	12	60
Jangam	3	1	—	—	—	4	16
Telukula	4	2	—	—	—	6	23
Sali	4	—	—	—	—	4	11
Vadram	1	—	—	—	—	1	3
Mangali	7	—	—	—	—	7	24
Cakali	6	1	—	3	—	10	46
Settigollu	13	—	—	36	—	49	169
Mala	6	22	—	—	—	28	121
Madiga	12	—	—	—	—	12	41
Mixed (Brahman + Gavara concubine)	—	1	—	—	—	1	4
Total	214	106	19	39	12	389	1,713
	pop.: 904	pop.: 513	pop.: 108	pop.: 132	pop.: 60		

TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF LANDHOLDINGS BY CASTE

(Figures are for all castes of all settlements of Aripaka Revenue Village)

Caste	*No. of households*	*Wet lands* (acres)	*Average of wet land per household*	*Dry lands* (acres)	*Average of dry land per household*
Brahman	8	11.5	1.4	33.0	4.1
Raju	10	30.4*	3.0	72.0	7.2
Komati	10	8.5	.8	35.0	3.5
Golla	1	—	—	—	—
Gavara	173	223.0	1.2	297.0	1.7
Kapu	23	18.7	.8	25.7	1.1
Pedda Kapu	2	.2	.1	.7	.35
Velama	29	37.7	1.3	53.7	1.85
Kamsali	12	3.7	.3	.5	.04
Jangam	4	1.0	1.0	.4	.1
Telukula	6	1.0	.1	.8	.13
Sali	4	—	—	1.8	.45
Vadram	1	—	—	2.4	2.4
Mangali	7	.5	—	6.0	.85
Cakali	10	2.8	.2	.2	.02
Settigollu	49	7.0	.1	47.4	.96
Mala	28	2.8	.1	3.5	.12
Madiga	12	.1	—	1.3	.10

*They have additional lands in another village (6.5 wet, 12.0 dry).

that they also own 64% of the coveted wet lands (223 out of 348 acres) and 51% of the dry lands (297 out of 581 acres), or 55% of both taken together.

Relationships between the Settlements of Aripaka Revenue Village in the Past

The historical development of the various settlements is the story of the relationships between castes. In particular, the pattern of settlement fission is associated with tensions in the village social hierarchy. Groups drift into separate settlements as part of an attempt to establish autonomy from groups who dominate them.

Settigollu, for instance, have a tendency throughout the region to found satellite hamlets outside of main villages. They are one of the three lowest castes above the Harijans, but, unlike Barbers and Washermen of similar status, they are not dependent upon the higher castes in long-term service relationships. Among themselves they openly discuss their resentment of being dominated by higher castes (e.g. being coerced to yield their seats on raised cots and sit on the ground if Gavaras should arrive at a public performance). Without openly challenging the caste hierarchy they simply move away to form suburbs in which they are the majority. There they are not so frequently confronted with having to act submissively to higher castes (though they are hardly averse to the tribute which the Harijans pay them).

The foundation of Yatapalem has its origins in a Settigollu (or Yata) satellite settlement associated with the original main village of Aripaka. The name Yatapalem literally means 'Yata village'. After some time, Gavaras began moving to Yatapalem from Aripaka. Their motivation was similar to that of the Settigollu. They disliked being dominated by the Rajus. Though this explanation is remembered by many, the usual rationalization for the shift was that they wanted to be 'closer to their fields'. By a process of natural growth and immigration, the Gavaras soon came to outnumber the original Settigollu (see Table 3).

The Settigollu again formed a satellite settlement, this time outside of Yatapalem. It came to be known as *Cinna Yātapālem*, 'little Yatapalem'. This is a common pattern where the Settigollu satellite hamlet takes the name of the main village with the prefix '*cinna*' in front of it (e.g. Bangarampalem's Yata hamlet is called *Cinna Bangārampālem*). Recently, the residents of Cinna Yatapalem have begun to use the name *Kottapālem*, 'new village' (see Table 3). This is a further expression of their bid for autonomy. In addition the name Cinna Yatapalem has a negative connotation in that *cinna* means 'inferior in status' as well as 'smaller in size',

hence one reading of the village name would be 'village of the inferior Yatas.' It is significant that few other castes have cooperated in using this new name. Similarly, few castes use the Yata's new caste name of *Seṭṭi-gōḷḷu*, except perhaps when it is useful to be polite to them in their presence. The fact that Settigollu have a more dignified notion of themselves than others are willing to accord to them is a symptom of the structural motivation for the foundation of such satellite settlements.

In the 1940s members of the *Maḷḷa* clan in the Gavara caste began moving out 'to be near their fields', founding a new settlement at the roadside, *Maḷḷōḷḷa Pākalu*, 'field huts of the Malla'. This move can be viewed in the same terms as the foundation of Settigollu satellite settlements. In this case it is associated with the relatively sudden rise in the economic and political fortunes of the Malla clan. They obviously seem to be asserting a mild autonomy from the numerically preponderant *Śaragaḍam* clan and politically predominant *Rāpēṭi* clan. Significantly, the recently created post of Panchayat President has been captured by the Mallas.

The relationship of the settlements of Yatapalem and Mallolla Pakalu with the main village of Aripaka has primarily concerned the relations between the Gavaras and two higher castes. One of them, the Rajus, have already been mentioned and are still a political force to be reckoned with. The other caste are the Komatis who migrated into Aripaka around the beginning of the twentieth century. In the 1930s the world economic depression forced many Gavara farmers to mortgage their lands to Komati loan-givers. Many Gavaras and lower caste people migrated to work in Rangoon, Burma. This was the heyday of the Komatis who used their new income to build elaborate cement and tile mansions. In the 1940s and 1950s the Gavaras began recovering their lands and many Komatis migrated to nearby towns. Those that remained went into a decline. Their splendid mansions in the village are now dilapidated, and some of the rooms are rented out to school teachers recently posted to the village from outside.

The change in Gavara fortunes was partly due to the new-found power of electoral politics in post-Independence India as well as to money remitted from Burma. Surplus money derived from migrant labour still occasionally enables farmers to build cement houses and buy agricultural land. However, the expulsion of Indians from Burma in the 1960s ended the most accessible source of such money.

Most recently the economic and political rise of the Gavaras has expressed itself in the building of a new Rama temple in Yatapalem in 1969. Though Aripaka Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis were honorifically involved in the dedication ceremonies, the temple construction was entirely financed and engineered by Gavaras. This new Gavara-sponsored temple

in Yatapalem far outshines the small, dilapidated Rama temple in Aripaka[2] which was financed by Komatis at the height of their prosperity.

Events during the Period of Fieldwork

The broad shifts in economic and political power over the past decades have been sketched here to place the village in an historical context and explain its complex settlement pattern. In addition, it will be helpful to note certain developments during the period of fieldwork. From the point of view of the political structure of the village, the most important event was the death of the village headman in December 1970. The prolonged uncertainty over the appointment of a new Headman coloured numerous events during the subsequent year.

The succession to the headmanship is no longer unconditionally hereditary. The incumbent must first pass a government examination which is open to all. Thus, Gavara rivals and even members of other castes were in competition with the son of the deceased headman. This is not the only way in which the government has impinged upon the authority of the Headman. It has also created the post of Panchayat President which ambiguously overlaps with the headmanship, at least from the point of view of the villagers.

A further factor undermining the authority of the headmanship is that it is easier for a younger man to become Headman. Due to the declining prestige of the headmanship, elder men who would have been eligible were in more remunerative government jobs. In addition, the government ignored the factor of age in determining the eligibility of candidates for headmanship. Thus, the man who finally became Headman was younger than most of the traditional elders over whom he was supposed to hold authority. This led to the development of a generational rivalry that was evidenced in controversies over the running of certain festivals. Political office had shifted out of the hands of the elder generation into those of the younger Gavaras who had grown up in the new climate of cash-crop prosperity and political opportunity.

NOTES

1. Spelt Anakapalle on English language maps; Aripaka is sometimes spelt Arepaka.

2. On a return visit to the village in 1977 I discovered that the Aripaka Rama temple had been refurbished.

CHAPTER 2

VILLAGE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The aim of this chapter is to outline features of village social structure which are essential for understanding the significance of the rituals described in later chapters. The approach to society offered here stresses rivalries, discrepancies and disputes because they highlight the tension between ideal structures and actual daily realities. At the outset, it should be stressed that these are typical features of all villages and that Aripaka can in no way be considered abnormally conflict-ridden. In fact, among villages in the region, inhabitants of Aripaka revenue village enjoy a high reputation for harmonious social relations.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first deals with relations within the Gavara caste. Here, the main features are the authority of male elders, the centrality of the household as an economic unit, and the differences in political and economic fortunes of families. We see, however, that such differences are submerged when the question arises of maintaining their position in competition with other castes.

The second part of the chapter deals with the relations between castes in the village. We find that the complex caste hierarchy is basically upheld by the political and economic power structure. However, a major paradox is the rise in power and influence of the Gavaras. While they do not openly challenge the traditional rank of their superiors, they maintain a considerable degree of independence from them. By not overtly contesting their subordination to the higher castes, they legitimate their own power and position over the lower castes.

Even at this stage of our enquiry, we get a glimpse of the crucial significance of ritual and symbolism. It is impossible to discuss the status of widows without mentioning symbolic forehead dots. Similarly, household and clan structures cannot be considered without an explanation of marriage and funerals. Caste ranking too, ultimately depends upon ritual and symbolic forms for its expression.

RIVALRIES AND TENSIONS WITHIN THE GAVARA CASTE

Challenges to Husbands' Authority over Wives

Before focussing on the Gavara household it will be useful to examine some of the organising principles of the caste. Here two hierarchical principles are fundamental. These are the principle of seniority—by which elders have inherent authority over their juniors—and the principle of male authority—idealised in two core relationships, husband to wife and father to child. These principles are of crucial significance in the organisation of the household, the chief residential and property-holding unit in society. A household is composed of residents of a particular dwelling unit who are under the authority of a single household head, the *ijamāni* (or *yajamāni*). Since descent is reckoned patrilineally and residence after marriage is generally patrilocal, this head is ideally the eldest male, accompanied by his wife and children.

After the first male children marry, there is an increasing tendency for them to split into independent household units. This fission can begin in stages with the setting up of separate hearths and then residences, while still maintaining joint management of family land. This nominal division of landed property eventually leads to full separation and economic independence. While the head of a household is alive, there is the tendency for married sons to remain together. Once he dies, the ever-present pressures to split are no longer constrained. If a male household head dies before any sons have married, his widow becomes the head of the household. However, once one of the sons marries, he becomes the head, even if his mother continues to live with him. After the death of their father, brothers share the obligation to provide financial support for their mother and unmarried sisters regardless of household splits.

Control over land is ideally inherited exclusively by and through males, with each male sibling entitled to an equal share. However, if a man has no male offspring, there is a way he can secure male assistance and assure that his share of his patrimony does not revert to his brothers. He can arrange an uxorilocal marriage for his daughter, termed *illarakam*, whereby his son-in-law comes to live with him, and his daughter's sons inherit his land. A man who goes to live with his father-in-law in this way is in a position of ambiguous authority in a household. He lacks backing from his male kinsmen, since he has abandoned ties with them by moving to his wife's village. He also lacks economic means independent of his father-in-law's authority.

There are two long-term effects of *illarakam* marriage. The first is the undermining of a clan's numerical presence in a village through time if its members are forced too frequently to resort to *illarakam* due to a lack

of male heirs and a lack of males for adoption. The second is the introduction of new clans into the village. In fact historically, *illarakam* has been the principal process by which new Gavara clans have migrated into Yatapalem.

To stress that, in the family, hierarchical principles are fundamental is not to discount the intense ties of affection linking family members to each other. Hierarchy is, however, the basic characteristic of formal authority. Occasions when such authority is highly conspicuous, the disciplining of children and the negotiation of marriages, are important for the economic functioning and well-being of the households's members. It is the responsibility of children to participate in their parents' economic activities, and parents and family elders exercise full authority over the choice of a spouse for their children. It has already been noted that marriage strategies can be determined by a household's requirements for agricultural labour and heirs.

Reinforcing the authority of a husband over his wife is the maintenance of a five- to ten-year age difference between them. In this way seniority, a hierarchical principle based on age, is enlisted to reinforce the hierarchical relations between the sexes, the dominance of husbands over wives.

At marriage, a wife becomes a member of her husband's named patrilineal clan. Death pollution caused by her death is subsequently a matter affecting her husband and the clansmen of his lineage segment rather than her natal family and its clansmen. As mentioned above, women do not own land in their own right, though they can temporarily manage the estate of their unmarried children. The severance of the ties between a woman and her natal family is also a feature of marriage residence patterns. Out of 168 marriages of Gavara males in the village current in 1972, some 60% of their wives came from outside the village. Of the remaining 40%, more than a third were married to a woman who was not related to them (such as through being a cross-cousin).

Other conventions in daily life express the formal authority of husbands in the household. Wives are not supposed to eat before their husbands, even if the latter are unexpectedly delayed in returning home. There is also a taboo on the wife saying her husband's name. She even refers to him with their children merely as 'the household head.' Such behaviour is termed *mariyāda*, showing proper respect and honour.

Female Challenges to Male Authority: Economic Activity, Quarrels

Though women never overtly challenge male dominance, covertly they exercise considerable influence. In addition there is an ideology that women do challenge males. It is the nature of this ideology that such challenges

justify male domination and imply that women have an inferior character.

Unlike women of the higher castes like Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis, who are prohibited from working, Gavara women participate in the economic life of their families to a significant degree. This gives them influence in family decisions. Gavara women play an important role in numerous agricultural operations—transplanting, weeding, harvesting, carrying cane and fodder—in addition to their domestic tasks of providing meals for the family and looking after their children. Gavara women are also strikingly active in economic activities, autonomous from their husbands. Gavara women generally form over 40% of the sellers at the weekly village market where they deal in vegetable produce from their own family plots. Women reported earning between Rs. 10 and Rs. 15 at such markets. This means that much of the cash realised from the vegetable plots cultivated by their men passes through their hands.

A number of Gavara women also engage in entrepreneurial activities. They buy vegetables, spices, fruit, and chickens at one village market and sell them for higher prices at another in the rotating weekly cycle. There is a solid core of women who regularly attend markets and predominantly depend on their income from market sales. They are mainly poorer, self-supporting widows or divorced women. However, most Gavara women, from even the wealthiest families, engage in supplementing their incomes through trading in the weekly markets. A portion of the money from such sales often remains in their hands. This money is sometimes used to make loans of up to Rs. 50, independent of male control. Of course, this is all on a very small scale by comparison with the economic activities of the men in cash crop sales and loans.

An incident of suicide provides evidence that female economic dominance in a family can produce severe strains. The man who committed suicide had been known in the village as an especially diligent farmer, though rather retiring and with few friends. He had married his wife in an uxorilocal arrangement whereby he came to live in his wife's village to work the land of her father. He had two young sons, and the land was to pass on to them from his father-in-law who had already died. He himself had no inherent rights in the land which still belonged to his wife's family. Though he was the titular head of his household, his wife and her widowed mother exercised inordinate control over the household, the boys, and the income from their vegetable plot.

The degree of his virtual subordination to his wife and widowed mother-in-law finally reached an intolerable point. An incident occurred in which he consulted an itinerant curer to relieve him of chronic abdominal pains. When it came time to pay the curer for some medicine, he requested money from his wife who customarily sold the vegetables he raised. She

refused and scolded him for wasting money. This was the final blow in his inability over the years to exercise authority over his wife and her mother. He went into a rage and drank a quantity of insecticide, Endrin. He died a gruesome death. From his death bed, he took the opportunity of publicly denouncing his wife and mother-in-law saying "why are you crying for me now, when I'm dying, when you refused me money while I was alive"? and "you can have all the land to yourselves now!" The incident brought shame on the women but also on himself for having let himself be dominated by them.

In more usual circumstances women exert pressures in family matters through the numerous quarrels which repeatedly punctuate the course of social life. Women chide their husbands to tend to long overdue repairs of irrigation pumps, or complain of their husbands' wasting money on liquor. The nature and form of these quarrels throw light on the role of women and in particular on the kinds of pressures they exert to influence decisions.

While men have numerous formal avenues for expressing their authority in society, women tend to exert pressure in informal ways. These usually take the form of public displays of emotion or sentiment. Women have a particular stylized crying lament which they employ if they are dissatisfied. Typical occasions on which these occurred were instances of a woman objecting to her husband's drinking, weeping over his having beaten her, or bewailing a grown son's disobedience. This same stylized moaning lament is associated with other situations of stress and is a vehicle for expressing other deeply felt emotions, for example lamenting a family member's severe illness or death, or even the sudden death of the family's draught animal.

Angry outbursts of temper are also employed in quarrels. In these, women go into rages which usually include a form of stylized verbal abuse (*tiṭṭulu*), and what amounts to a listing of grievances. The abuse is delivered with a vertical motion of the left arm and an exaggerated emphasis on the last syllable. Common forms of misfortune wished upon the adversary concern widowhood and death, for example: "Remove your forehead mark!" (this refers to the widowing ceremony after certain funerary rites); "Snap your waist cord!" (an act done by a widower at a funerary rite); "Take your ashes and throw them out!" (cremation ashes); "Put your three leaf plates!" (a reference to funerary offerings); as well as the common, "son (or daughter) of a whore!" These curses, shouted loudly and intended for neighbours to hear, are a form of public denunciation. They are best understood as appeals by women to the general public to solve disputes. Women's outcries and anger often rise to a pitch which the surrounding society cannot tolerate, and mediation is quickly begun. In

this way, women force men to become involved on their behalf. Fights between women are often broken up by male relatives who have close ties with both parties.

Āśa and Sexuality: an Ideology of Women's Character

Linked to the association of women with emotional outbursts of anger or lamentation is the widely held belief that women are generally more emotional and impulsive than men. The key ideological concept involved in this notion of women's character is *āśa*. This word has various connotations meaning passion, desire, lust, emotion, love, hope, and worldly attachment. Men are considered to have less *āśa* than women, and wandering ascetics (*sādhus*) are said to be totally devoid of *āśa*. In ritual activity as well as in everyday life, women are often encouraged and expected to express *āśa*. Women's attachment to their families is thought to be greater than men's. When questioned about *āśa*, Gavaras explicitly stated that a married daughter retains stronger attachment to her parents than does a married son. Women's *āśa* even tends to continue more prominently than men's after death. It is usually female ghosts not male ones which come back and haunt the living.

Sexual promiscuity is an area of behaviour in which women are perceived as posing a threat to their husbands' dominance. In the village, some twenty illicit liaisons were the subject of covert gossip and served to reinforce men's suspicions about all adult women's sexual drives. There were also overt, boisterous quarrels when men believed they had caught their wives flirting suspiciously with other men. Men are highly concerned with women's uncontrolled sexuality since it is one of the rationales used to justify the necessity for male domination and authority over females. Such domination is reinforced by the age differential in marriage in which a male's authority is reinforced through his always being older than his wife. Such notions directly derive from the idea of women's *āśa*, their compulsive emotionalism and passion. Men believe that if they do not satisfy their women sexually, they will run off in the night for secret meetings with 'boy friends.' It was commented that older men can satisfy women by sustaining intercourse longer than younger men, who by this theory would seem to have less self-control.

Marital Instability

Problems of control over women's sexuality are associated with the considerable Gavara divorce rate. Adultery and suspicions of adultery are often given as grounds for divorce. About a quarter of all Gavara households in the village have at least one member who has been divorced. Theoretically divorce is said to be permissible only when no children have been born to the couple. But this is not always so in practice. Barrenness

is not usually cited as the main ground for divorce though it greatly contributes to the other kinds of tensions which are said to lead to divorce. Such problems include the conflicts between a wife and her husband's mother, disputes over non-payment or misuse of dowry, illness leading to impotence, and disagreements between husband and wife.

Unstable marriages challenge the ideals of hierarchy. When a marriage breaks down, a wife refuses to obey her husband, either in daily activities or in matters of sexual fidelity. A common pattern of marital breakdown often begins with the failure of a wife to return to her husband from a visit to her parents' village. While this entails collusion by the woman's parents, it is based on the initiative of the woman herself. If her parents cooperate with her, even grudgingly, it is because she is able to convince them that she is not being properly treated by her husband.

Mothers-in-law are often at the centre of conflicting attachments and jealousies between women which focus on men. A new wife often finds herself at odds with her husband's mother, particularly if they live in the same household. The husband's mother covets her influence over her son and behaves domineeringly towards her son's wife, over whom she has authority by virtue of seniority and her position of influence over the husband. Wives resent this and try to persuade their husbands to live separately. Since problems with the husband's mother are frequently cited as rationalizations for divorces, and divorces occur usually only when there are no children, it is likely that barrenness weakens a wife's position with relation to her husband's mother. On the other hand, having children strengthens and cements the position of a wife in her new family. In any event, household fission is often related to or blamed on conflicts between women.

Widows and the Status of Auspicious Woman

Like the notions of women's excessive *āśa* and sexuality, widowhood is an ideological issue, with a 'self-fulfilling prophecy effect', which enables men to rationalize their domination over women. The status of widows is a potential challenge to the principle of the hierarchy of the sexes, since a widow is a woman who is not subordinated to the authority of an older man and often has seniority in her own right.

Society destines a high proportion of women to become widows by using the principle of seniority to reinforce the authority of the husband. Since it is customary for brides to be substantially younger than their husbands, natural demographic forces make a high incidence of widowhood inevitable. Thirty-one percent of all Gavara households in the village have an unremarried widow residing in them, in contrast with 1% with a widower. Of eighty-six recorded incidents of Gavara marriages terminated

by death, 70% involved the death of the husband while only 30% involved the death of the wife.

There is an aura of inauspiciousness that surrounds a woman whose husband has died before herself. This is emphasised in ritual symbolism and can very much be considered a product of it. Rather than elaborating widowhood, the cultural system emphasises the auspiciousness of women who are not widows in ceremonial contexts, for example at weddings and funerals. It then stresses the exclusion of widows from auspicious activities. (Widows can, however, be present as spectators on the periphery.)

The concept of auspicious woman is more easily understood when the Telugu categories are considered. In the word *pēraṇṭālu* there is an identification of the status of a married woman whose husband is still alive (*pēraṇṭālu*; *pativrata*, 'husband-devoted'; or *puṇyastrī*, 'meritorious woman') and that of the status of a young pre-pubescent unmarried girl (*bālapēraṇṭālu*, 'young *pēraṇṭālu*'). Both of these are contrasted with the inauspicious status of widow, *vedava*.

The important role of the auspicious woman is symbolised by the application of turmeric and vermillion powders to the body. Women with their husbands still alive and young unmarried girls have the proud prerogative of wearing an auspicious yellow and red forehead mark, *boṭṭu* (a red dot on a yellow background). The distribution of turmeric to women at the end of numerous ritual occasions is considered a highly meritorious and auspicious act thought to contribute to their husbands' longevity as well as to the efficacy of the particular ritual.

In acting out the concept of auspicious woman, women internalize an ideology of the ideal wife as one who, through her devotion and faithfulness to her husband, keeps him alive and herself in an auspicious status. This amounts to a reinforcement of marital stability and female subordination in a society in which, as we have seen, there are considerable tendencies to marital instability, and both real and imagined challenges to male dominance.

Divisive Tendencies Among Gavara Kinsmen

Associations of kinsmen beyond the immediate family are based on principles of patrilineal descent. All Gavaras belong to non-localised descent groups, here called clans, with patrilineally inherited names (*iṇṭipēru*, 'house name'). In normal usage the clan name precedes the personal name given in infancy. At marriage, a woman takes the clan name of her husband. These clans are internally segmented into localised groups whose common descent is assumed to be directly traceable, even though this may not be actually possible in all cases. These groups are categorised as *tega* or *kōva*.[1] The sub-clans are not formally named entities though some do have inform-

al nick-names which designate them by their common apical ancestor. The principal context in which the sub-clan units exhibit shared responsibilities is in the sphere of ritual. Ritual pollution, resulting from the death of a member of this traceable descent group, is transmitted exclusively to its members and not to others even if they share the same clan name and live in the same village. Other obligations which are shared by members of sub-clans are mandatory attendance at each other's celebrations of life cycle rituals such as first hair-cutting, first menstruation, weddings and funerals.

Two sets of funerary customs are practised among the Gavaras. Adherence to one set or another is ascribed to clans as wholes and does not vary with the locality. One set has loosely Shaivite sectarian associations, employing a Jangam as a *pūjāri*, ritual officiant. The other set has Vaishnavite *pūjāris*. Clans which perform the ceremony conducted by a Jangam are designated *pākrutōḷḷu*, while those which perform the ceremonies presided over by a member of the Sri Vaishnava caste are called *cakradārulu*.[2] There are no restrictions on the intermarriage of adherents to these different funerary sects.

Informal ties exist between members of sub-clans. For instance, houses in the village tend to cluster along sub-clan lines because of the tendency of brothers and children of brothers to live together. This brings about an informal association of families in everyday life though it is not a mandatory principle according to which people must construct their houses. Expressions such as *kāḷḷa doḍlō*, 'in the street of the Kalla (clan)', and *naiḷḷu doḍlō* in the street of the Naidus (lineage segment of the Saragadam clan) are designations of neighbourhoods by clan and sub-clan/lineage segment which are in common usage.

Male members of the closely related sub-clan households also associate with each other at their *kallam*, clusters of cattle sheds and jaggery ovens out in their fields. Brothers and their descendants tend to remain side by side and maintain contact, informally chatting and exchanging assistance, even after they no longer hold land in common. In 1972 there were 33 such *kallams* ranging in membership from two to seven households. Sixteen had between three and five households.

Rivalry Between Brothers

Since land and property is held by men and is inherited through males, it is not surprising that conflicts and tensions between brothers most commonly involve economic issues. One of the main problems that arise in the natural growth of a family is the contradiction of the principle of seniority with the principle of unity of brothers. The ideal is for brothers to remain united[3] under the authority of their father even after they have married.

Actually observed cases of undivided 'joint' families are rare, however. Usually brothers separate from their parental household some time after their marriage. There seems to be a pattern that several of the oldest brothers marry before the splitting-up process begins. Splits between brothers are the result of competitive rivalries which negate the age hierarchy, disrupt cooperative unity, and defy the authority of the father. In general, the degree to which the ever-present divisive tendencies between brothers are inhibited is related to vested interests in joint land and the presence of a living father.

Since there is no institutionalised mode of structuring this fission, the rationales for household partition are fairly diverse. They range from fairly amicable divisions upon the father's death to accusations that a brother did not contribute his fair share of labour. Such accusations are aired in the quarrels which break out between brothers' wives. Essentially, once a man starts having children, he develops an interest in them which begins to conflict with his loyalty to his brothers. Ultimately, either through consensus or through outbreaks of fights, division becomes inevitable.

Let us examine an actual case history of three brothers, A, B, and C, whose father has already died and who have divided their households and lands. A, the eldest, never had any children but adopted the infant son of his brother B when the latter's wife died in childbirth. This provided A with a male heir and helped B 'get rid' of his son by his first wife, freeing him to remarry.[4]

B's second marriage brought him great economic benefits. His wife's father and brother both work as migrant labourers in an industrial project in a distant town. One works as a crane operator and receives a very good salary. Periodically they send back money which is entrusted to B to invest in land on their behalf. With some of the money, B built himself a substantial new cement house. In order to enable his prepubescent daughter to benefit from this new wealth and retain a say in it himself, B arranged a betrothal between her and his wife's younger brother of thirty. Villagers commented that from the point of view of the couple the great age difference between them was undesirable. However, it was recognised that it was in B's best interest to keep his wife's family's money interconnected with his own family. Since inheritance is strictly patrilineal it might seem peculiar that this should be considered as a method of keeping wealth in the family. However, parents' bonds of emotion and authority tend to be cognatic, particularly in such cases of close inter-marriage.

B had political ambitions in the village and ran unsuccessfully for Village Panchayat President. This put him into direct competition with

a member of the same clan. He lost because his opponent had much firmer backing from kinsmen and a wider general following than B. B's interest in politics can be traced back to his father having been a Headman of the village. On his father's death, the headmanship shifted to his father's elder brother's son. Thenceforth, it seemed the line of succession would not return to his brothers or their descendents. Aside from standing for the Panchayat election, B continued to emulate his father in a number of ways. He often advised villagers on the astrological almanac regarding auspicious timings for beginning agricultural operations or for performing religious ceremonies. This was a skill he had learnt from his father. B also maintained a friendship with an influential Raju in Aripaka, a man whom many Gavaras felt was opposed Gavara political interests. B also had connections with the head of the council of Panchayat presidents of the villages in Subbavaram block.

B's elder brother, A, has reacted to B's success with a mixture of dismay and competition. He privately bemoans his economic and political inferiority to his younger brother who does not cooperate with him or share the fruits of his success. The contrast between the two brothers' households is no more apparent than in the types of houses they live in. While B lives in a big cement house with a compound wall and electricity, A lives in a single segment of a simple thatched mud long house. A made his own bid for advancement when he attempted to set up a rice mill in Mallolla Pakalu to rival one run by a Komati in Aripaka. Unfortunately, the loan he got was not sufficient to launch the project, and the mill site still stood empty. A then became active in the government-sponsored cooperative bank in Subbavaram, becoming an important member of its board of directors. This earned him contacts with local politicians in Subbavaram but did not seem to give him access to further funds for his own mill project. In the political sphere of the village, he entertained the idea of competing for the vacant post of Headman. In the end, more realistically, he encouraged his son to study for the government headmanship examination.

The youngest brother, C, is an example of the special position of the younger brother in many families where there is a large age difference between elder and younger brothers. The particularly weak position of the youngest brother is recognised and special provisions are often made for him to live with his father and take over the family house upon the father's death. This protection of the interests of the youngest son is a recognition of the tendency for brothers to compete with each other once the restraining influence of the father is removed. Sometimes such

special treatment of the youngest son engenders the very jealousy which it is designed to counteract.

During the course of fieldwork, C became politically active in a youth faction which advocated the performance of the Gairamma festival against the opposition of the 'elders' who did not want to spend the money for it. Thus, after being overshadowed by his elder brothers, C entered a period of political awakening and competition in his own right.

Fission of Sub-clans

While the ideal is that families are unified groups, the demographic realities of expanding population exert pressures on families to divide. One way that these pressures are minimised at the sub-clan level is through telescoping the depth of the genealogy. Such telescoping is made possible by the classificatory kinship terminology that equates children of parallel relatives with brothers and sisters. A father's brother's son and a mother's sister's son are called, 'brother'; a father's brother's daughter and a mother's sister's daughter are called, 'sister'.[5]

It follows that the children of one's classificatory brother and sister are called by the same terms as the children of one's own brother and sister. Since only classificatory terminology is used, it is easy for the distinctions of own versus classificatory siblings to become obscured when previous generations are recalled. The relationship which is spoken of in classificatory terms as in Chart 1(A) is seen to be genealogically as Chart 1(B). Further probing reveals that elder members of the family remember ties going back further as in Chart 1(C). The latter connections are not known to the younger generations, so the process of telescoping, of minimising the genealogical distance to a common ancestor, is a constant on-going one. It follows that even the deepest genealogies which the older people remember are likely to be telescoped versions of the actual kinship ties.

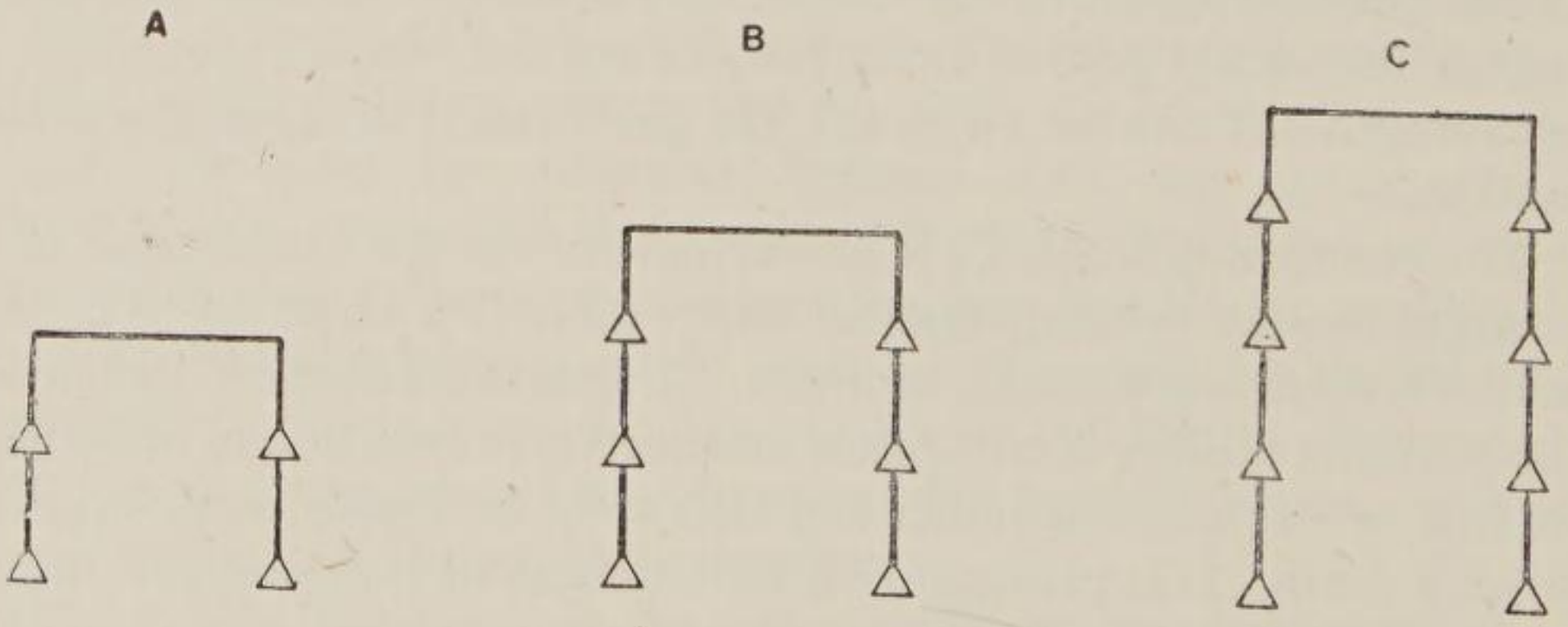


Chart 1. 'Telescoping of Lineage Depth'

In the case of the Rapeti sub-clan, illustrated in Chart 2, the two groups of brothers 1 and 2 speak of their fathers as having been brothers of 3, which is true in classificatory terms. They are well aware that the actual connection lies further back. Most of them think their grandfathers had been brothers. With difficulty, the oldest people can trace back as far as their great-grandfathers. Nevertheless, this 'knowledge' is considered irrelevant and is not passed on to younger people.

Despite this corrective tendency to de-emphasise genealogical distance, there seems to be a maximum size at which a sub-clan can function efficiently for ritual purposes. After this, fission occurs. The sharing of death pollution, *maila*, upon the death of a member is the main distinctive feature of shared genealogical interconnectedness. When the descent group has expanded and branched out very widely it becomes unwieldly for all its members to observe restrictions on performing rituals. The group gets so large that they are constantly prevented from performing rituals and festivals. This coincides with the feeling by many sub-clan members that the genealogical connection to the person who died is remote and no longer traceable. Since death pollution is transmitted along lines of actual or theoretically traceable descent, they reason that hardly any pollution can be transmitted.

Such a situation occurred in the 1920s. A man of the Saragadam clan died just before the *dīpāvaḷi* festival. This rendered almost the entire Saragadam clan unable to perform the festival (except for a small sub-clan which had originated elsewhere and did not share pollution with the others). This became the pretext for splitting the Saragadam clan into three separate pollution-sharing sub-clans. Elder men of the Saragadam clan gathered and a new shoulder cloth was tied into three knots. The cloth was cut and a knot symbolically given to each of the three newly-created sub-clans. Though they share clanship they no longer acknowledge a direct genealogical tie.

Violation of Brother-clan Exogamy

In matters of marriage, it is clan membership which determines the unit of exogamy within the endogamous boundaries of the caste. Even if their relationship is not traceable, members of the same clan may not marry each other. In addition, from the point of view of each clan all other clans are categorised either as *bāvamaridulu* 'in-laws', i.e. marriageable, or *annatammulu* 'brothers', i.e. unmarriageable. Unlike the system such as practised by the higher castes (Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis) in which a number of clans are grouped together into exogamous categories, called *gōtram*, which hold throughout the caste regardless of locale, the two cate-

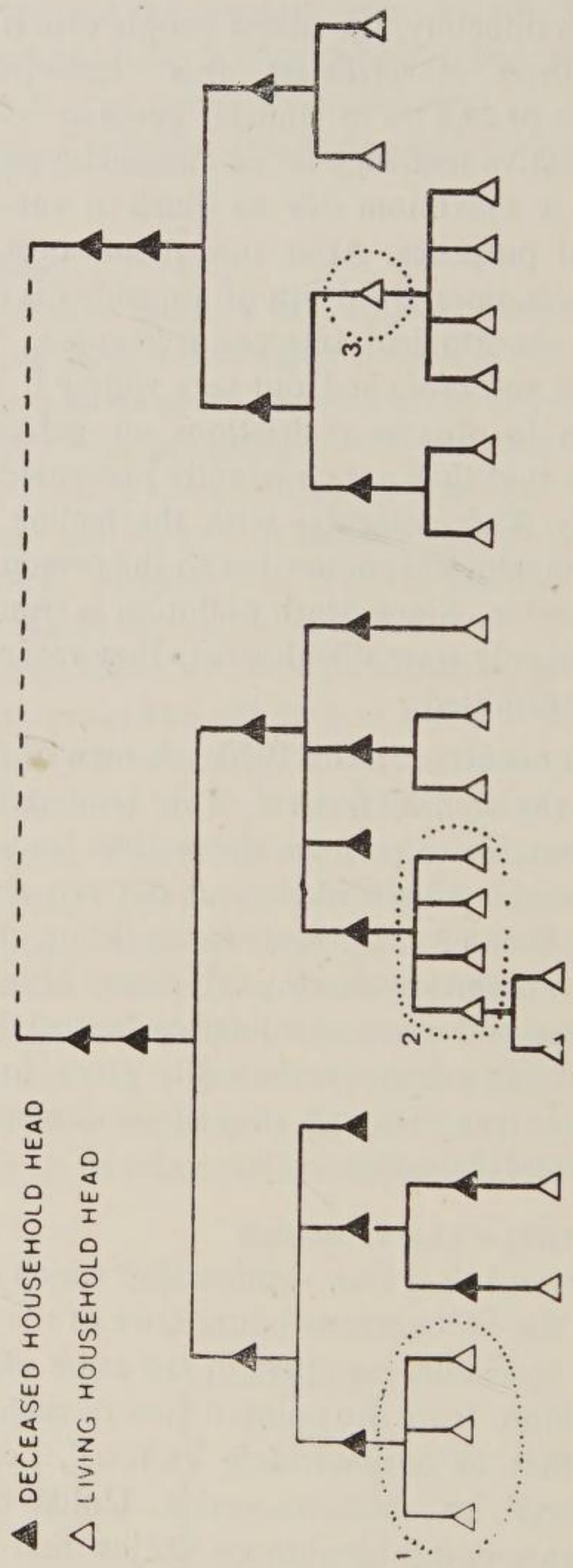
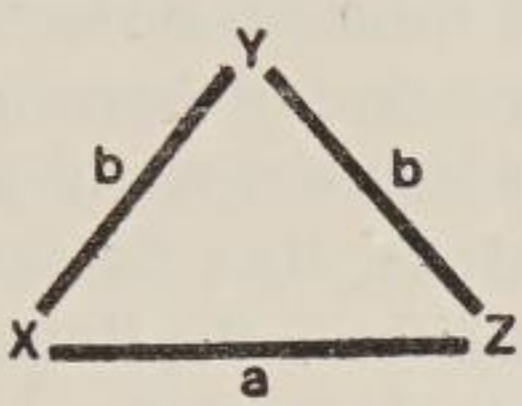


Chart 2. 'The Rapeti Sub-Clan'

gories of *bāvamaridulu* and *annatammulu* hold only within the village and do not apply outside. The rationale for the *annatammulu-bāvamaridulu* divisions is that if men of two separate families marry sisters of a third family, then their children will be related to each other as classificatory brother and sister, i.e. parallel cousins, and hence unmarriageable despite the fact that ordinarily, coming from different clans, they would be marriageable (see Chart 3). In the case of only three families being involved, the kinship terminology itself would make it clear that particular



X, Y, Z – three different clans

a – annatammulu, relationship of 'brother' clans, unmarriageable

b – bāvamaridulu, relationship of 'in-law' clans, marriageable

Chart 3. 'Marital Relations between Gavara Clans in a Village'

people are parallel cousins. However, a problem arises when classificatory kinship ties are considered since it could be possible not to be an actual parallel cousin while at the same time having a parallel link through classificatory kinsmen. The *annatammulu-bāvamaridulu* categories[6] prevent people of marriageable families from this danger of being classificatory parallel cousins, since if clan X marries clan Y, and if clan Z marries clan Y, then clan X is classified as being unmarriageable to clan Z (see Chart 3). On the basis of these marriageable-unmarriageable categories, members of clans apply fictive kinship terms to the members of other clans in the village, regardless of whether actual marriages have taken place between them and third parties.

However, actual practices do not fully conform to this ideology. Informants are apologetic about the apparent paradox that two separate sub-clans in the Kalla clan give consistently opposite characterizations of the clans they consider to be 'brothers' or 'in-laws'. There is the notion that the categories should apply to clans as wholes. This can be understood when it is realised that the unconnectedness between lineage segments—sub-clans—is a matter only concerning members of a particular clan. (Death pollution is only transmitted within the sub-clan.) In the case of the Kalla clan, the confusion arises because one Kalla sub-clan entered the village on

an *illarakam*, uxorilocal marriage. Since the categorisation into 'brother' and 'in-law' clans is a pragmatic one involving the closely intermarried clans of the village, a member of a different village is not bound by these categories. In the Kalla case, such a family married into the village and found itself in the opposite category of clansmen with the same name (*intipēru*) who had long been residents of the village.

There are other sorts of violations of the principle which are more difficult to explain. These are cases in which individuals violate the accepted clan relationship in order to form advantageous ties with economically or politically prominent families. One of these inconsistencies is the relationship of the three most numerous and wealthy Gavara clans in the village, Saragadam, Rapeti and Malla. The Saragadam clan's 56 households represent 32% of the Gavara total, the Rapeti's 28, 16% and the Malla's 19, 10%. Traditionally, Saragadam families have married both Rapeti and Malla families, categorising them as 'in-law' clans. According to the system, Rapeti and Malla must thus consider each other to be 'brother' clans and should not intermarry. However, in fairly recent times a Rapeti man has married a Malla woman. They rationalised this action saying that the system of exogamy is a means of preventing prohibited ties by their link with third parties. Since the two families were not linked by third parties, they could break the convention. But this was in disregard of clan unity and threw off calculations for other members of their respective clans who did have ties with third parties. Villagers were particularly loath to admit this type of violation and embarrassed to talk about it.

Such sporadic violations of the 'in-law'/'brother' system is evidence of shifting patterns of alliance and power between clans. Previously the Saragadam clan, traditionally the first founders of the village, had maintained marriage ties with 12 of the other 15 clans in the village while the members of those 12 clans were prohibited from intermarrying among themselves. This had the effect of consolidating the central position of the Saragadam clan, preventing the formation of a counter alliance of the other clans. But now the Malla clan, which relatively recently has risen to economic and political prominence, and the Rapeti clan, which has traditionally held political office in the village (as Headmen), are making new alliances among themselves challenging the pre-eminence of the Saragadam clan. Significantly, the first case of Rapeti-Malla marriage took place between important families belonging to the two lineage segments with the highest average irrigated landholdings in the village. The Rapeti man was the village Headman and the Malla woman was the sister of one of the wealthiest Mallas, the founder of the Mallolla Pakalu settlement and the father of the current village panchayat President.

POLITICAL INEQUALITIES AND COMPETITION AMONG GAVARAS

Wealth Skews the Authority of the Elders

There are two sides to the internal authority structure within the Gavara caste in the village. On the one hand, seniority is emphasised in that the caste's internal authorities are termed *peddalu*, 'elders', 'big men', 'superiors'. On the other hand, interdependence and unanimity are emphasised. This is seen in the lack of specifically designated individuals to fill the role of elders on occasions of dispute settlement. There is always a seemingly random selection of older, respected men who appear. The apparently fluid informal composition of a group of elders emphasises the ideal of unanimity of authority of those of superior age. Judgements made by them represent a combined putting-together-of-heads, ideally representing the caste as a whole. As such, no particular individual or clan has an explicit right to pre-eminence over any other.

The principal activity of elders is to preside over meetings which are called to arbitrate and settle disputes. The dispute and the meeting to settle it are known as *tagu* (or *taguvu*). Such dispute settlement sessions take place almost anywhere, under a tree, in a teastall shed, at the village Rama temple, or on the verandah of a house. Disputes within a caste generally concern breaches of norms between caste members and particularly between kinsmen. Jurisdiction over such disputes remains within the caste and its elders. The most typical internal disputes involve three kinds of issues:

(i) *Marital breakdown and divorce*— e.g. a wife refuses to return to her husband and a *tagu* is held at the wife's family's village, attended by the elders of the husband's family and village; elders of a Gavara woman come from her natal village to discuss with her husband's elders the terms of dissolving her marriage.

(ii) *Kinsmen's responsibilities*— e.g. a Gavara man's four sons are summoned to a *tagu* concerning lapses in their responsibilities to support their parents; two brothers argue at a *tagu* over dividing their responsibility to support their widowed mother with whom the wife of one has been in conflict.

(iii) *Inheritance*— e.g. a *tagu* is held to divide the land and debts of a recently deceased Gavara farmer between his son by his first wife and his second wife representing her unmarried son, making provisions for the second wife's upkeep and the marriage of her four unmarried daughters.

The perpetrator of a serious breach of norm or the guilty party in starting

a fight or conflict is considered to have committed a *tappu*, 'a wrong, fault or error,' and a fine, *jerimānu*, is levied, payable either to the injured party or the village Rama temple. If *tagu* decisions are not complied with, further *tagus* are held and harsher sanctions applied, such as threats of social ostracism including the boycotting of marriages, funerals and other rituals.

While they do not form a clearly delineated or officially designated group, a number of Gavara men tend to stand out at these decision-making meetings and dispute settlement sessions. These are the men who often preside over the arbitration of conflicts, discuss village welfare, and assume directive roles during village festivals. The configuration of such men at any one specific occasion is always different but the same fifteen to twenty men generally tend to be present. It is here that the ideology of caste unity is not supported in reality. While the fluidity of composition of a group of elders ostensibly emphasises unanimity, political decisions are actually made by those men with the most wealth and influence.

It is difficult to attribute a single factor behind men's assumption of the role of elder. They do tend to be the eldest males, successful householders having families and children, prosperous farmers, and from the numerically or economically most prominent Gavara clans. Having one or any combination of these attributes does not automatically bestow authority. There are extra ingredients of 'knowing how to talk to people' and commanding respect. Some who have all of these qualities do not assume the role of elder, while others, usually younger or less economically successful, who occasionally attempt to assume leadership roles, are ignored or not acknowledged.

Twenty-eight instances of meetings to deliberate disputes or issues of village welfare were observed during the course of fieldwork (see Table 4).

As might be expected, the greatest number of men who act as elders (28 out of 37 men, 75%) come from the three prominent clans, Saragadam, Rapeti and Malla. However, the number from the Saragadam clan and its sub-clans is remarkably low. This is explained in terms of data on the sub-clan level where, for Saragadam, the factors of size and factors of average individual family wealth do not coincide to the degree that they do for Rapeti and Malla. Saragadam sub-clans might excel in one of the two factors but not in both together. Saragadam 1[7] is very populous but poor in average landholdings per household. Saragadam 3 is wealthy but rather small in size. Saragadam 2 is not particularly large, nor does it have outstanding wealth.

In the data, Rapeti clan members appear disproportionately more active as elders than Mallas. The data are somewhat biased in that they are based on observations made in Yatapalem. Since numerous important Malla

TABLE 4 : SUB-CLAN AFFILIATION OF ELDERS ACTIVE IN DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

(Based on 28 disputes)

Sub-Clan	*Individuals acting as elders*	*Individuals appearing more than 5 times*	*No. of appearances of elders of the sub-clan*	*House-holds in the sub-clan*	*Sub-clan's net wet landhold-ings*	*Sub-clan's average wet land holdings per house-hold*
Rapeti 1	12	7	75	25	54.8	2.1
Malla	9	4	35	1	41.9	2.2
Saragadam 2	3	1	13	16	21.1	1.3
Adari	3	—	6	10	8.6	.8
Saragadam 3	2	1	7	7	11.7	1.6
Kalla 1	1	1	9	7	4.1	.5
Dadi 1	1	1	6	2	—	—
Saragadam 1	1	—	2	26	31.8	1.2
Dadi 3	1	—	2	1	3.0	3.0
Bhimarasetti	1	—	1	3	4.5	1.5
Boddeda	1	—	1	2	3.5	1.7
Konatala 1	1	—	1	7	8.2	1.1

families live in Mallolla Pakalu, activities of their members are less likely to have been observed than Rapeti clan members who live exclusively in Yatapalem. Nevertheless, distance of residence does not seem to have been a deterrent to two of the four Mallas. They resided in Mallolla Pakalu and appear in the list of elders who participated on more than five of the twenty-eight occasions observed.

In Table 5 we can observe that the village Panchayat Vice-President, Rapeti Ramu Naidu, participated as an elder far more consistently than anyone else (19 occasions). By contrast, the village Panchayat President, Malla Jogi Naidu (5) and the village Headman, Rapeti Demudu (7) were far less active in this role. This had much to do with the principle of authority by seniority. Both the Panchayat President and the Headman were in their twenties, far younger than the average elder between 45-60 years old. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the Panchayat President's

TABLE 5: DATA ON THE MOST ACTIVE ELDERS

(Elders involved in settling five or more disputes out of 28 observed)

Clan (and Sub-Clan)	*Individuals appearing more than five times*	*Personal name*	*No. of personal appearances*	*Public Office*	*Whether factory shareholder*	*Personal ownership of wet land*
Rapeti 1 (Cinna Rapetollu)	7	Ramu Naidu	19	Vice-Pres.	+	3.0 acres
		Sannayya Satyam	9	—	+	5.0
		Somunaidu Satyam	8	Bank coop	—	2.0
		R. Jagannadham	8	V. L. W.	+	4.5
		Demudu	7	Headman	—	2.5
		Appala Naidu	7	Temp. Headman	+	2.0
		'Potti' Jogi Naidu	6	—	—	4.0
Malla (Pedda Mallollu)	4	Venkatramayya	9	Pres.'s Father	+	*(7.3 joint)
		'Pedda' Ramu Naidu	8	(Head of wealthiest family)	+	*(12.0 joint)
		Sri Ramulu	5	Teacher	+	2.5
		Jogi Naidu	5	Panch. Pres.	+	.0
Saragadam 2	1	Appala Naidu	11	—	—	*(5.1 joint)
Saragadam 1	1	Durgu Naidu	6	—	+	2.0
Kalla 1	1	Appanna	9	—	—	*(2.5 joint)
Dadi 1	1	Appala Naidu	6	—	—	—

*Land ownership figures which are marked 'joint' indicate that the man is the head of a family, in which his land has been parcelled out to his sons officially, but over which he exercises much control.

father, Venkatramayya, was more active (9) than the President himself. The activity of Saragadam Appala Naidu (11) stands out. Not only is he one of the oldest of the elders, he is the head of a large joint family of seven adult sons. In addition to being in a special position as a descendent of founders of the settlement, having certain ritual prerogatives which will be discussed later, he takes a particularly keen interest in public affairs.

The list of elders who participated most recurrently (Table 5) reveals various other attributes of elders. Sixty percent (9 out of 15) are shareholders in the cooperative sugar factory (at Govada near Chodavaram), confirming that they are frequently the wealthiest farmers in the village. Six out of 15 hold political office or are connected to the government. One is an aspiring, though so far unsuccessful politician. Another two are heads of large landowning families. Only 2 out of the 15 do not exhibit one or a combination of these attributes: factory shareholder, political or government office holder, elderly head of a large family. The two men who do not possess these characteristics are as follows. Kalla Appanna seems to be accorded respect because of his seniority and religiosity. He is the oldest of Gavara family heads and known for having constructed an *āśram* in his fields where *sadhus* have stayed. Dadi Appala Naidu also has some prominence in religious spheres. He is a song leader in religious singing sessions, *bhajana*, and leads the young men in folk dances on festivals. He also has much authority among the descendents of the once powerful Surisetti clan, no longer important because so many had only female offspring with uxorilocal marriages. On the whole, however, the men who assert themselves as village elders have distinct advantages of wealth and power over their fellows.

Competition for the Headmanship and Panchayat Presidency

All of the important political offices in Aripaka Revenue Village are held by Gavaras. This means that rivalry and competition for political posts reflect political alliances and competition within the Gavara caste. On the whole, we find a situation similar to that in dispute settlements. Rapeti and Malla clansmen are prominent while the Saragadam clan are conspicuously inactive. The hereditary post of Headman and the office of Panchayat Vice President are both in the hands of Rapeti men while the Panchayat President is a Malla. In this consideration of rivalry and competition in formal political leadership our main observations concern the influence of the State government. It has created the opportunities for such competition through its two bureaucratic structures, revenue collection (the headmanship), and decentralised community development (the panchayat).

The Headman, *munsif* or *munasabu*, is responsible for tax collection

which he generally does from the platform of the village temple accompanied by the Record Keeper, *karṇam*, a Brahman of Aripaka who keeps all the village records of land ownership, annual tax assessments and receipts. Farmers are summoned to the Headman by the Village Servant, *bārki*, a Mala of Aripaka who also runs other errands for the Headman. Births, deaths and land transfers have to be registered at the Tahsildar's office in Anakapalli and require the headman constantly to travel to Anakapalli. The government considers the Headman responsible for law and order in the village and, with the help of the Record Keeper, he must inform the police of any accidental deaths or suicides. The Village Servant is sent with any such reports to the Police Outpost in Subbavaram. The headman is also responsible for curbing the sale of liquor by unlicenced vendors. In the past, the Headman was a powerful autocrat with an important say in dispute arbitration, but this authority has been diluted with the introduction of the Panchayat bureaucracy, President and Vice President.

Let us look more closely at the recent path of hereditary succession to the headmanship in the Rapeti clan. It can be seen from Chart 4 that the

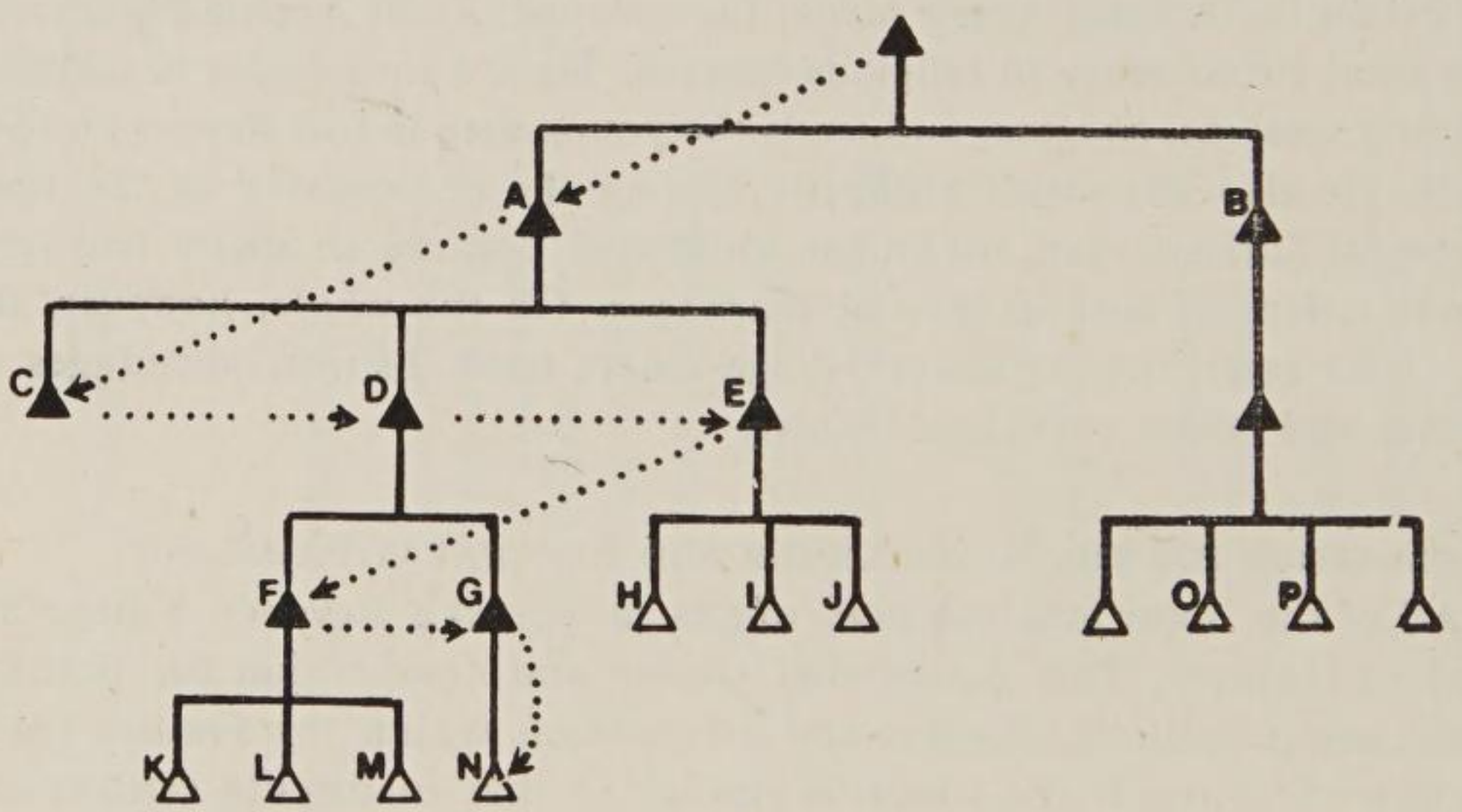


Chart 4. 'Path of Succession to Village Headmanship'

succession runs on lines of patrilineal descent and on a principle that gives priority to age and goes to the next generation only after passing from elder to younger brother. (Not enough information is available on B in Chart 4 to know why he did not inherit the headmanship from A. It is likely he died first.) The headmanship passed from E to F because F was older than E's son H. Similarly, G was also older than H. At an early stage of fieldwork G unexpectedly died. There followed an unsettled seven-month period during which one Rapeti man, O, the brother of the

Panchayat Vice President, P, served as temporary Headman. The recommendation of the Record Keeper secured the selection of O. Among the reasons for O's being a good neutral choice was that he already held the position of Headman of a neighbouring Yata hamlet, Sirsipalli, and was familiar with the bureaucratic procedures required of him. He was safely out of the competition for the headmanship since he already held the position elsewhere and was not particularly ambitious in Aripaka politics.

It was generally accepted that the sons of F (i.e., K, L, and M) had priority over N in terms of traditional hereditary succession. However, they were not interested in asserting these rights since all had received higher education and aspired to government or other town jobs with greater prestige and pay.

In former times the succession would have taken place fairly quickly and been confined to the Rapeti clan. But the new requirement that the candidate must pass an open government examination produced a situation in which six people were studying for the examination, only two of whom were Gavaras. N, the twenty-one year old son of G, had the advantage of the Record Keeper's favour and received special instruction from him, which amounted to a sort of apprenticeship. Other competitors could be seen walking about the village trying to memorise examination answers from printed examination guides.

The opportunity of competing in an examination brought out elements of competition that might otherwise have been suppressed. Soon after the death of G, H expressed a desire to become village Headman. (His reasons for aspiring to political power are discussed earlier in this chapter in the consideration of rivalry between brothers where he is referred to as 'A'.) In the end, he encouraged his son to sit for the examination, perhaps so as not to appear personally so ambitious, particularly since he stood little chance of success himself.

The competitors of other castes were a Velama of Aripaka, a Brahman of Aripaka, a Telukula bank employee in Anakapalli, and the illegitimate son of an Aripaka Brahman and his Gavara concubine. The government's throwing open the headmanship to universal competition contradicted the previous structure of power that had confined the post to a particular caste and clan, with succession along lines of seniority.

Though traditional principles of succession were challenged, they ultimately prevailed, and N was confirmed as Headman. In fact N failed the examination on the first try and was given a second opportunity to pass it. One might view this as a reconfirmation of the traditional pattern of succession, and claim that only lip service had been paid to achievement of the post by merit. But these events have a more serious implication for the nature of the Headman's authority. Previously, the Headman's autority

was unquestioned. Now the Headman derives his power from the government whose reconfirmation he is required to seek. Even though N finally got his post, it was demonstrated that five others could have taken his place. The general lowering of power and prestige of the post influenced older candidates (K, L and M) not to compete for it. This further undermined the authority of the Headman since age no longer reinforced the authority of the post.

Let us now turn to the office of Panchayat President. With the introduction of the new panchayat system, the first president was a Malla clansman of Yatapalem. He was succeeded in the 1969 election by a young (23) but highly educated Malla of Mallolla Pakalu. The President's duties, aside from presiding over meetings of the elected village council, which meets infrequently, are connected with government sponsored economic development schemes. He has access to government funds which are allotted to the panchayat for village improvement. In 1971 he had Rs. 3,500 at his disposal to finance the construction of cement platforms for five village wells and a drain to keep monsoon rains from flooding village streets. There were also 835 villagers who received government loans from the President. These loans, intended for fertilizer and improved seeds, were offered at low interest rates. The loans ranged from Rs. 50 to Rs. 500 with most around Rs. 50-100 and only a handful at Rs. 200 and 500. In addition to these economic benefits which he can dispense, the President has numerous political connections. He is friendly with the head of a committee of all the local village presidents and through him has potential access to the various district and state politicians with whom that politician has ties. These include a former local candidate for the State Legislative Assembly who was elected and appointed State Minister for Education. This tempting array of economic and political influences challenges the previously autocratic power of the traditional Headman.

We have already noted how the government opened the way for competition over the post of Headman. The introduction of the new panchayat system had the same effect. There is even more scope for competition and rivalry since the officers are elected, and there is no previous tradition of hereditary succession. In the last panchayat elections there was a contest in one Yatapalem ward between two Rapeti clansmen (I and P in Chart 4). P had far more kinsmen and friends to support him and was consequently the winner. There was also some controversy when the nine elected ward representatives voted to select a president from among themselves. Rapetis, led by I, opposed the selection of a Malla of Mallolla Pakalu. But the threat of a Raju-Velama alliance finally caused the Gavaras to close ranks and support the Malla candidate. A Rapeti, P, eventually came to be the Panchayat Vice President.

These rivalries are expressions of the differences in clan and sub-clan wealth discussed earlier. Since the strong Rapeti clan are firmly in control of the headmanship, the increasingly wealthy Malla clan made a bid to assert themselves through this new political post. By contrast, Saragadam clansmen are notably inactive in formal politics, with the sole exception of one assertive man in Yatapalem, Saragadam Appala Naidu, who was the second most frequently participating elder in dispute-settlement sessions (see Table 5).

Economic Inequalities Between Gavara Kinsmen

To examine further the realities of differences in wealth and power within the Gavara caste, data were collected from every Gavara household (a total of 173). They throw light on the prominence of certain individuals and families in leadership and decision-making. Additionally, they provide an explanation for the rivalries between certain clans which became apparent when controversies arose over the timing and conduct of village festivals during the period of fieldwork.

The relative wealth and power of Gavara clans will be examined in three respects: population size, landholding, and involvement in the cash crop economy of sugar-cane. We shall see that none of the three principal clans, Saragadam, Rapeti or Malla, has a consistent advantage over the others in all three criteria. Saragadam are by far the largest clan but are the most internally segmented and have the lowest average holdings (in wet lands per household). Rapeti are the biggest kin unit if only subclans are considered. Rapeti also have the largest net holdings of wet land for any clan. While ranking third in terms of numbers of households, Malla rank highest in terms of wealth (cash income). We have just noted the way in which these differing competitive advantages are manifested in the political life of the village. The Rapetis hold the traditional headmanship while Mallas hold the Panchayat Presidency (though both compete for the latter) and Saragadam hold certain ritual prerogatives but are rather inactive politically.

Disparities in Clan Size

Table 6 shows the strength of Gavara clans ranked in terms of numbers of households. The three largest clans, Saragadam, Rapeti and Malla, together comprise 58% of the total number of households of the caste (with Saragadam accounting for 32% of all Gavara households). The size of these relatively large clans strongly contrasts with the large number of clans with five households or less. Many of the latter are present in the village as a result of uxorilocal marriages. The six clans with ten households or more account for 74% of the total number of Gavara households

TABLE 6 : GAVARA CLANS RANKED BY NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS

Clan	*Households*
Saragadam	56
Rapeti	28
Malla	19
Kalla	15
Adari	10
Konatala	10
Surisetti	5
Doddi	5
Alla	5
Boddeti	4
Bhimarasetti	3
Polimarasetti	3
Dadi	3
Boddeda	2
Polimera	1
Sadaram	1
Marisetti	1
Pentakota	1
Yellapu	1
(19 Clans)	173

while the remaining thirteen clans account for only 26%. When household population figures are broken down into units of sub-clans, that is, groups that share death pollution (Table 7), and lineage segments within these (Table 8), a very different picture emerges. Saragadam's internal segmentation places it at a disadvantage when compared with similar sub-groups within the Rapeti and Malla clans. These lineage segments maintain closer, more immediate ties and hence are a more effective base for political influence. Table 7 shows only the top 11 sub-clans (plus Saragadam 5 included for the sake of comparison). There are a total of 33 such sub-clan entities within the 19 Gavara clans of Aripaka Revenue village.

TABLE 7: GAVARA SUB-CLANS RANKED BY NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS

Clan and Sub-Clan	*Households*
Saragadam 1	26
Rapeti 1	25
Malla	19
Saragadam 2	16
Adari	10
Kalla 2	8
Kalla 1	7
Konatala 1	7
Saragadam 3	7
Saragadam 4	7
Surisetti	5
(Saragadam 5	1)

TABLE 8 : NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS OF NAMED LINEAGE SEGMENTS WITHIN GAVARA SUB-CLANS

Lineage segment	*Households*
Rapeti 1. C (Cinna Rapetollu)	19
Malla P (Pedda Mallollu)	13
Saragadam 2. N (Naidoru undi)	14
Saragadam 1.1 (Ayyappagori tega)	10
Malla C (Cinna Mallollu)	6
Rapeti 1. P (Pedda Rapetollu)	6

INEQUALITIES IN LANDHOLDINGS

To explore why numbers alone do not account for the political prominence of Rapeti and Malla clan members, let us examine the factor of landholding. Table 9 points up Saragadam fragmentation and Rapeti strength at the sub-clan level.

Further calculations of average wet landholdings per household (see Table 10) show that Mallas (2.2 acres) slightly surpass Rapetis (2.1 acres)

TABLE 9 : NET HOLDINGS OF WET LAND BY GAVARA SUB-CLANS

Sub-Clan	*Households*	*Acres of wet land*
Rapeti 1	25	54.8
Malla	19	41.9
Saragadam 1	26	31.8
Saragadam 2	16	21.1
Saragadam 3	7	11.7
Adari	10	8.6
Konatala 1	7	8.2

Note: Only the clans with the seven largest landholdings have been listed above.

TABLE 10 : AVERAGE WET LANDHOLDINGS BY HOUSEHOLD

Sub-Clan	*Average wet land per household* (acres)	*Households*
Malla	2.2	19
Rapeti 1	2.1	25
Saragadam 5	2.5	1
Saragadam 3	1.6	7
Surisetti	1.4	5
Saragadam 2	1.3	16
Saragadam 1	1.2	26
Saragadam 4	.7	7

and that both of them have far greater average landholdings (and, it is assumed, wealth) than any Saragadam sub-clan with a comparable number of members, e.g. Saragadam 2 (1.3 acres) and Saragadam 1 (1.2 acres).

In estimating the importance of clans and sub-clans, the two factors—large numbers of households and high average landholdings—have to be considered together. A single family having a large landholding (e.g. Saragadam 5 in Table 10) is not likely to be as influential as a large number of closely related families with large landholdings. Similarly, a large group of households in a clan that has less than average landholdings

(e.g. Saragadam 1) is less likely to be as powerful as a somewhat smaller group with greater holdings.

It is significant that the two lineage segments with the highest average landholdings in the village, Pedda Rapetollu and Cinna Mallollu (see Table 11), are the very families that violated the conventions of 'brother' clan exogamy mentioned earlier. Consolidation of their wealth and power appears to have overridden their unity with their fellow clansmen which would otherwise have prevented them from challenging the conventions of clan exogamy.

TABLE 11: LANDHOLDINGS OF LINEAGE SEGMENTS IN THE RAPETI AND MALLA CLANS

Lineage segment	*Households*	*Average holding of wet land per household* (acres)	*Total of group's wet land holding* (acres)
RAPETI 1			
Pedda Rapetollu	6	2.55	15.35
Cinna Rapetollu	19	2.07	36.50
Rapeti 1 sub-clan as a whole	25	2.19	51.85
MALLA			
Pedda Mallollu	13	1.96	25.55
Cinna Mallollu	6	2.73	16.42
Malla sub-clan as a whole	19	2.20	41.97

Differences in Income from Cash Crops

When we examine differences in income from cash crops, we find that the ability to benefit from selling sugar-cane is largely determined by ownership of suitable amounts of wet land.

There is a continuum of involvement in the cash crop economy (see Table 12). Those at the top produce more cane for the mill while smaller producers concentrate on jaggery production.[8] Since the Malla families have the highest concentration of good wet land, they can undertake an annual commitment to supply cane to the cooperative sugar mills. The Rapetis have to combine their efforts to even approach a similar level of production. Their cooperative factory shares are held jointly. Apart from the Saragadam sub-clan, Saragadam 3, no other family has factory shares. All the remaining sub-clans concentrate on jaggery production to the extent their wet landholdings permit.

TABLE 12: ROUGH ESTIMATE OF CANE AND JAGGERY PRODUCTION AND INCOME FOR GAVARA SUB-CLANS

Sub-Clan	*House-holds*	*Annual jaggery production* (in kg)	*Households supplying cane to coop. factory*	*Amount of cane supplied to factory* (in tons)	*Estimated Rupee equivalent of sales of jaggery and cane* (in Rs.)
Malla	19	17,850	3	124	32,720
Rapeti	26	26,500	2*	16	28,410
Saragadam 2	15	18,500	—	—	18,500
Saragadam 3	7	6,300	1*	65	14,090
Saragadam 1	26	13,900	—	—	13,900
Saragadam 4	7	2,300	—	—	2,300
Saragadam 5	1	150	—	—	150
Adari	10	4,850	—	—	4,850

*Factory shares which are jointly held by a number of households.

Note. The sub-clans are listed in descending order of income with the exception of the last two entries, Saragadam 5 and Adari, which are included for purposes of comparison.

In comparing data from Table 12, on the net income of sub-clans, with information on the average income per houshold given in Table 13, we again see the economic strength of the Mallas. Saragadam 3 make a strong showing (as their participation in the cooperative factory indicates) but lack the power of numbers and net income of the Rapeti and Malla groups.

Conclusions on the Inequalities in Wealth Between Gavara Clans and Sub-Clans

Let us now summarise the information on the great differences in size and wealth of Gavara clans and sub-clans. Three clans, Saragadam, Rapeti, and Malla, stand out as the most important of the nineteen Gavara clans in the village. Saragadam is by far the largest clan but is internally segmented into numerous sub-clans (kinsmen who are intimately related to the point of sharing death pollution), none of which has advantages of size or wealth over comparable units in the Rapeti or Malla clans. Rapetis are the biggest unit on the sub-clan level and possess the largest net holdings of wet lands (see Table 9). On the other hand, though they are a

TABLE 13: AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME PER HOUSEHOLD FROM SUGAR-CANE (CLANS AND SUB-CLANS)

Clan	*Average income/household* (in Rs.)	*Total households*
Malla	1,722	19
Rapeti	1,082	28
Saragadam	873	56

Sub-Clan	*Average income/household* (in Rs.)	*Total households*
Saragadam 3	2,012	7
Malla	1,722	19
Saragadam 2	1,233	15
Rapeti 1	1,092	26
Saragadam 1	534	26
Adari	485	7
Saragadam 5	150	1

TABLE 14: CLAN AND SUB-CLAN RANK IN FIVE INDICES OF WEALTH

Particulars	*Clans*			*Sub-Clans*				
	S	R	M	S1	R1	M	S2	S3
Number of households	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	9
Net holdings of wet land	1	2	3	3	1	2	4	5
Average holdings of wet land	3	2	1	7	2	1	6	4
Net income	1	3	2	5	2	1	3	4
Average income per household	3	2	1	5	4	2	3	1

Abbreviations:
S = Saragadam, R = Rapeti, M = Malla, S1 = Saragadam 1, R1 = Rapeti 1, S2 = Saragadam 2, S3 = Saragadam 3.
Note. Ranks were arrived at by giving first, second, and third place etc. based on the various statistical tables. No attempt has been made to indicate relative differences.

smaller group, the Mallas have a greater concentration of average income per household and net wealth than any other sub-clan unit (see Tables 13 and 12, respectively).

The differences in clan and sub-clan wealth are tabulated in Table 14.

The effects of these differences have clearly emerged in the data on political activity already presented (see Tables 4 and 5). The men with political clout are members of families that are part of sub-clans that are both large in net size and high in average wealth. Having a large number of households in one's sub-clan or having wealthy families as relatives are not enough as a single factor in isolation.

RIVALRIES AND ANOMALIES IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CASTES

So far we have discussed issues concerned with the internal structure of the Gavara caste. It is now appropriate to consider relations between castes in the village. The material is arranged into four topics: caste hierarchy, economic relations between castes, political relations between castes, and the new ideology of the State. In discussing these topics we note the ideal principles which are fundamental to the structuring of relations between castes and settlements: (1) Castes are in a hierarchical and interdependent relationship with each other; (2) Superior castes are the employers of inferior castes and are economically dominant; (3) Superior castes have authority over inferior castes; and (4) The various settlements of the Revenue Village are closely interdependent. At the same time, we present material indicating a strong undercurrent of rivalry and competition in these intercaste relations. In the case of the Gavaras, though they cannot challenge their inferiority to the Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis in ritual status, they maintain a strategy of economic and political independence from them. There are many similar strategies and anomalies in caste ranking.

Caste Hierarchy and Status Competition

The Language of Caste Hierarchy: Customs

To inhabitants of the village, caste customs are among the principal properties that distinguish one caste from another. Caste endogamy assures a caste's ultimate preservation of its own set of customs, but it is the nature of those customs themselves that explains the hierarchical quality of caste differentiation. Apart from the presence or absence of the rite of *upanayanam*, investiture of males with the sacred thread, which distinguishes Twice-Born castes—Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis—from others,[9] sets of caste customs differ with respect to a number of important criteria, treatment of women (see Table 15) and dietary customs (see Table 16). Attributing these customs with implications for hierarchical status is based on an underlying assumption that the more restrictive the customs, the higher the status of their practitioners.

Let us look, for example, at customs relating to the treatment of women

TABLE 15 : COMPARISON OF CASTE CUSTOMS (CASTES OF ARIPAKA REVENUE VILLAGE)

Particulars	*Brahman*	*Raju*	*Komati*	*Kamsali*	*Kapu*	*Pedda Kapu*	*Jangam*	*Velama*	*Gavara*	*Sali*	*Telakula*	*Vadram*	*Mangali*	*Cakali*	*Settigollu*	*Mala*	*Madiga*
Perform upanayanam	+	+	+	+	−	−	−[2]	−	−	−[5]	−	−	−	−	−	−	−
Prohibit divorce	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	−	−	−[3]	−[3]	−	−	−	−	−
Prohibit widow remarriage	+	+	−[1]	+	+	+	−[3]	−[3]	−	−	−[3]	−[3]	−[3]	−	−	−	−

1. Formerly prohibited; now permitted if there were no children.
2. Wear a lingam in a case.
3. Permitted if there were no children.
4. Acceptable if up to one child. 'Difficult' if there are several children.
5. Said to perform *upanayanam* in other villages.

which centre on marriage. Most of the castes considering themselves the highest in status have the custom of prohibiting the remarriage of widows, who are considered to be inauspicious and guilty for their husbands' deaths. By contrast, most of the Shudra and both of the Harijan castes permit widows to remarry, though they still consider the status of widows strongly inauspicious. Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis strictly prohibit divorce as do Kamsalis, Kapus, Pedda Kapus and Jangams while the rest of the Shudra and Harijan castes permit it. Since it is generally the higher castes that do not permit it, there is an association between high status and this prohibition.

Married women of the Twice-Born castes are restricted from going out from the area of their homes at least not without being accompanied by other women. They are also not permitted to do any form of labour other than chores directly connected with cooking and household tasks. By contrast, most Shudra and all Harijan women are much more free and independent. But even among the Shudras there are gradations of permissiveness and independence of women. For instance, Golla women in nearby villages are not permitted to work in the fields and tend to look down on Gavara women as garrulous and having loose morals. This imputation of looser morality to castes lower than one's own is a consequence of the view that strict control is necessary to maintain higher morality. Based

on the premise that women have a natural propensity for sexual promiscuity, it follows that the higher the caste, the greater is the control that it feels it must exert over its women.

Customs relating to diet resemble the above patterns. In the village, the Brahmans and Komatis are the only castes that adhere to the 'restrictive', discriminating diet of vegetarianism. Virtually every other caste in the village eats meat. There are, however, gradations in the types of meat different castes eat. From Table 16 it can be seen that there are four dietary groupings. The general pattern is that each lower group of castes eats a less restricted diet (i.e. includes a further type of food which those in higher categories do not permit themselves).

TABLE 16 : CASTE DIETARY CUSTOMS

Varna	*Caste*	*Diet*
Brahman	Brahman	Vegetarian (no meat)
Vaisya	Komati	
Kshatriya	Raju	
Disputed	Kamsali	Permitted meats: chicken, mutton, goat, fish, eggs, wild pork
Shudra	Jangam	Prohibited meats: domestic pork, water-buffalo, beef
	Gavara	
	Kapu	
	Pedda Kapu	
	Velama	
	Telukula	
	Sali	
	Vadram	
	Mangali	Permitted meats: chicken, mutton, goat, fish, eggs, wild *and* domestic pork
	Cakali	
	Settigollu	Prohibited meats: water-buffalo, beef
Harijan	Mala	No restrictions on type of meat
	Madiga	

The Rajus are an exception to the pattern of gradations in descending hierarchical order since they are considered to be superior to the Komatis in status despite the fact that they eat meat. This exception, however,

follows a certain underlying logic. One of the characteristics of diet differences is that lower castes have less restrictive customs. Less restrictive customs are associated with less restraint on passions, as in the case of customs concerning the restrictions on women. The Rajus' place in the *varṇa* category, Kshatriya, identifies them as warriors and thus their reputed traditional profession derives from their strength and passion. Their meat-eating is part of their warrior ideology, a rationalisation of their strength over other castes in former times. Rajus are famed for the spiciness of their food, reinforcing this interpretation since the local belief is that spices induce passion. (To reduce their passion and sexual drives, Brahman widows are forbidden to eat onions, garlic, or other strong spices.)

Another aspect of dietary customs which links 'restrictiveness' with higher gradations of status is the ideology of food exchange. By this, a caste prohibits its members from accepting cooked food prepared by castes which it categorizes as inferior, while it allows them to accept food prepared by castes which it concedes to be superior. The permutations of the system can be seen in Table 17. Though there are only two choices available (acceptance or rejection), the factor of reciprocation by the other caste leads to four possibilities each with a different status implication. Ideally, only the first two possibilities should exist, for a clear-cut hierarchy. These are actually a single hierarchical relationship viewed from below and above. The complications introduced by the third and fourth patterns will be discussed below. This system of food-exchange conventions exhibits patterns similar to the customs restricting women and diet. Theoretically, the higher a caste is, the smaller the number of other castes whose food it is willing to accept. Similarly, the lower a caste's status is, the less discriminating it appears to be in accepting food from others.

The gradations in this system of caste ranking are finer than the hierarchical blocks of castes in various *varṇas* or dietary groupings (Table 16).

TABLE 17 : PERMUTATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF FOOD ACCEPTANCE

If one's caste ———			*another caste's food, and their caste* ———			*one's, then* ———		
1.	,,	,,	accepts	,,	,,	,,	rejects	,,	they are superior
2.	,,	,,	rejects	,,	,,	,,	accepts	,,	you are superior
3.	,,	,,	accepts	,,	,,	,,	accepts	,,	both are equal
4.	,,	,,	rejects	,,	,,	,,	rejects	,,	status unclear (controversial)

It must be borne in mind, however, that the number of actual situations when food might be offered for exchange is far smaller than a list of theoretical possibilities might lead one to expect. Most caste members know which castes refuse to accept their food and simply do not offer it, or if they do, do so only to show hospitality without expecting the offer to be accepted.

The rationale behind rejecting a particular caste's food is based on a combination of criteria. If the food is offered by a caste from a lower dietary grouping, then there is some disgust expressed,[10] indicating that such food is completely out of the question by virtue of its having been prepared by those who customarily eat food not fit to eat (e.g. domestic pork to a caste in the non-pork-eating dietary grouping, or meat to a vegetarian). However, within a dietary group, between castes closer together in status, the rationale is based on considerations of status. To accept food prepared by an inferior caste[11] would be beneath the dignity of a superior caste. When asked whether aspects of ritual pollution entered into prohibitions on eating food prepared by lower castes, Gavara informants insisted that they had never heard of such an idea. The only explanation they could give was that it was *rivāju*, simply the accepted custom and rule.

Many researchers on South Asian society have interpreted the status distinctions followed between castes as extensions of ideas about ritual purity and pollution. M. N. Srinivas, for instance, remarks that restrictions on relations between castes derive from concerns of groups to preserve their purity with respect to inferior castes. Violation of these restrictions pollutes the member of the other caste (Srinivas 1964 : 151). But as we have noted, Gavaras and other castes of Yatapalem deny that lower castes are inferior because they are ritually polluted or can cause ritual pollution analogous to the kind of pollution created by a relative's death. Rather, it is solely a matter of status and prestige.

In recent work on caste among Sinhalese Catholics in Sri Lanka, R. L. Stirrat similarly observed that there "was no question of the lower castes somehow polluting the higher castes." People should not accept food or in some cases water from members of lower castes, but this was a matter of an extreme code of manners rather than a set of ritual injunctions designed to protect the persons involved (Stirrat 1982 : 22). Dennis B. McGilvray has aptly summarised the situation in his observation that rank-generating caste interactions can be validated in terms of two rather different ideologies, religious status—purity, priestly descent, sacred knowledge, etc.—and feudal style patronage and service—kinship, allocated division of labour, hereditary servitude, etc. (McGilvray 1982 : 4). Moreover, these two ideologies are by no means the only ones. "The perceived

meaning of caste interaction in actual South Asian settings is capable of a great deal of pragmatic and historically contingent polyvocality, making a unitary ideology of caste difficult to establish on a pan-Indic ethnographic basis" (*ibid.* : 5) à la the theories of Louis Dumont or McKim Marriott. Instead, there is a "scope for dynamic variation in symbolic emphasis between regional caste systems and even between the perspectives of different groups within a local caste hierarchy" (*ibid.*).

Such a case is described by C. Parvathamma in Karnataka in which castes in the Lingayat or Veersaiva sectarian movement, and those influenced by them, reject the Brahmanical ritual culture (Parvathamma 1972: 18) and have a 'markedly reduced' notion of ritual pollution (*ibid.* : 23). These castes live side by side with Brahmans who do subscribe to notions of pollution, as well as Panchala castes (blacksmiths, goldsmiths, and carpenters much like Aripaka Revenue Village's Kamsalis) whose beliefs emulate the Brahmanical notions of ritual purity and pollution even though their claims to being equal with Brahmans have never gained ground (*ibid.* : 19).

Competitive Claims in Caste Ranking

In Aripaka Revenue Village we see a diversity of perspectives on ranking expressed by different caste groups. In a survey taken in which members of each of the village's castes were interviewed, people were asked whether their caste considered itself higher or lower than each of the other castes in the village. Then they were asked whether they would accept food from those castes, were it to be offered. (The type of food specified was a meal with cooked rice, *annam*.) These two questions are plotted in Table 18.

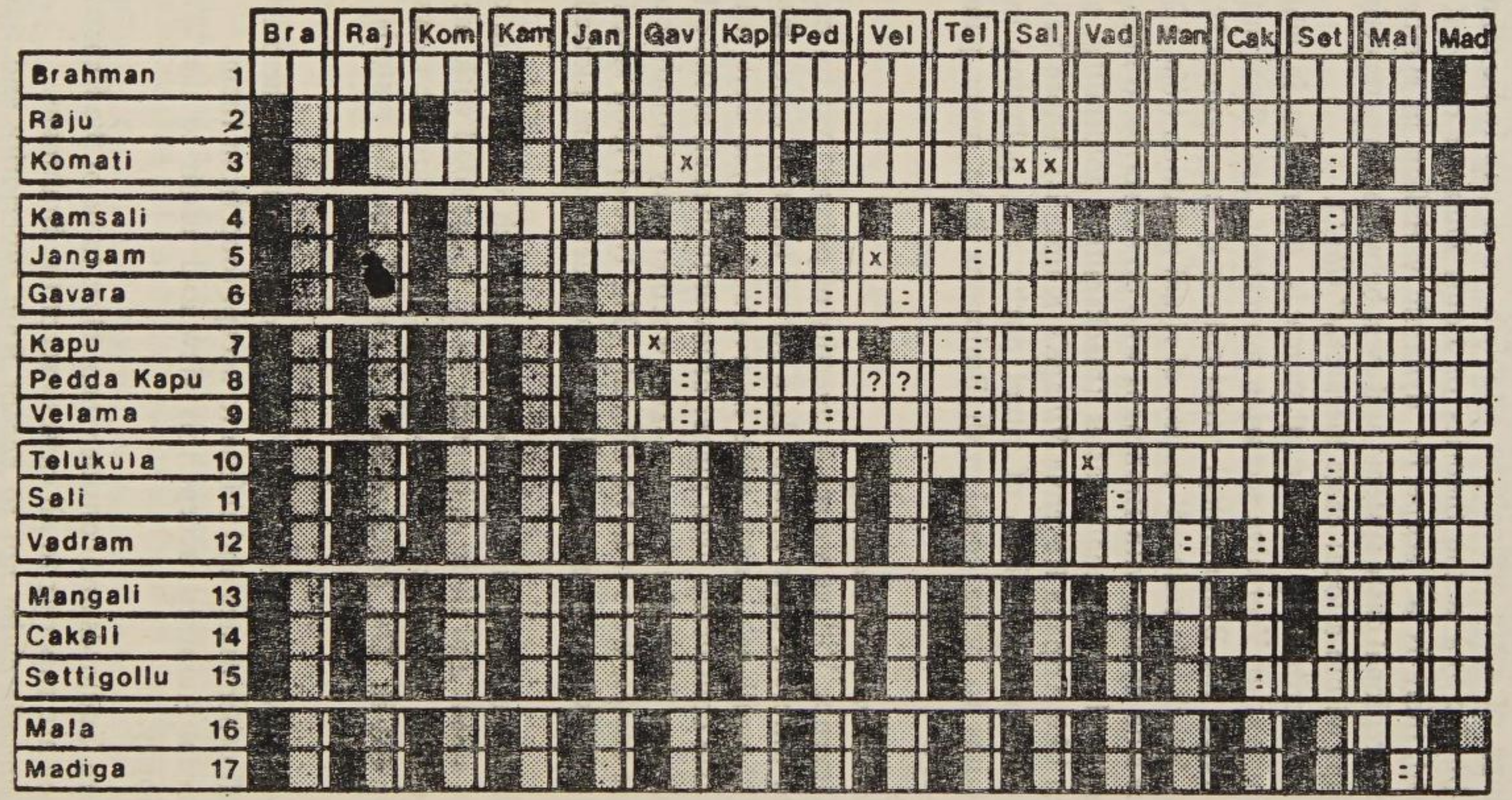
We now summarise the findings of the survey of each caste's opinions about their own status and their willingness to exchange food with members of other castes. In the case of each caste we compare the views of other castes toward it. The descriptions are based on the material in Table 18.

Brahmans, who are landowners and bureaucrats, consider themselves superior to all other castes and refuse to accept food from them.
All castes, except Kamsalis, accept this view and admit to the Brahmans' superiority.

Rajus, who are landlords and consider themselves to be of the Kshatriya *varṇa*, say they are superior to all castes except the Brahmans.
However, Kamsalis claim not to accept Raju superiority and refuse their food. Komatis accept Raju superiority but also refuse to accept food from them (since Komatis are vegetarians and the Rajus are not).

TABLE 18 : COMPARISON OF FOOD EXCHANGE PATTERNS WITH OPINIONS ABOUT STATUS

Data from Aripaka village (Based on exchanges in cooked rice)



Notes

Reading down one sees a caste's statements of refusing other castes' food (left column), and their own opinion of themselves (right column).

Reading across one sees the actions and opinions of other castes toward one particular caste.

If the caste refuse food the space in the left hand column is filled in.
If the caste consider themselves higher the space in the right hand column is gray.

× "conflicting opinions"
= "equal to"
? "information not known"

Example: Reading down we see that Kamsalis say they are higher than all other castes, i.e. all other castes are lower than them, but reading across we see that only one Harijan caste accept their food and only three of the lowest castes agree that Kamsalis are superior to them, while one considers them to be, at best, equals.

Komatis, shopkeepers considering themselves to be of the Vaisya *varṇa*, refuse food from all castes but the Brahmans though they acknowledge the superiority of Brahmans and Rajus.

The position of the Komatis is rather controversial when considered from the point of view of other castes. It is not surprising that Brahmans and Rajus refuse to accept food from Komatis since the Komatis accept their own position as inferior to those two castes. The Kamsali attitude that Komatis are inferior is consistent with their approach to all other castes and therefore not surprising. However, the opinions of Shudra and Harijan castes is unexpected, indicating a resistance to accepting the superiority of the Komatis. Jangams, Pedda Kapus, Yatas, Malas, Madigas and some Salis said they are against accepting food from Komatis, though not all of them deny Komati superiority. (Jangams, Kapus, Velamas, some Salis, Vadrams, Mangalis and Madigas concede Komati superiority while some Gavaras, Pedda Kapus, Telukulas and some Salis do not. Settigollu claim that Komatis are, at best, their equals.) It is striking that the Madigas are among those who refuse food from Komatis since they are the only caste that would even consider accepting food from Kamsalis whose food is rejected by all other castes including Malas.

Kamsalis, who are carpenters, blacksmiths, and goldsmiths in the village, are of the opinion that they are the original and true Brahmans. Like the Brahmans, they refuse to accept food from any other caste. They also refuse to concede superiority to any other caste.

But, the Kamsalis' claim to the highest status is not supported by reciprocal acknowledgements on the part of any but the lowest castes. Only Cakalis, Malas and Madigas concede superiority to the Kamsalis. The Settigollu say Kamsalis are, at best, their equals.[12] Only Madigas said they would contemplate accepting food from Kamsalis.

Jangams, who serve as religious *pūjāris* and work as tailors, consider themselves to be higher than all but the Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis, though they say they would only accept food from Brahmans and Rajus. Their refusal of food from Komatis seems to be part of the widespread boycotting of Komatis' food by many castes and appears to reflect an historical controversy over the rights Komatis have to the position they now are generally conceded to occupy.

Numerous castes to whom Jangams claim superiority do not agree with them. Kamsalis and Kapus neither accept food from Jangams nor believe them to be superior. Gavaras, Pedda Kapus and some Velamas say they would accept food from Jangams but do not concede Jangams' claim of superiority over them. Telukulas and Salis say Jangams are

neither higher nor lower, and are hence equal to them. Therefore, they might publicly accept food from Jangams without having to concede inferiority to them. The remainder of castes accept Jangam superiority.

Gavaras, the major farming caste of the village, unequivocally accept only two castes in the village to be superior to themselves, Brahmans and Rajus. There are conflicting opinions among Gavaras about the Komatis' superiority, although Gavaras say they would accept food from Komatis. The Kamsalis are considered similar to other lower castes who are inferior and whose food is unacceptable. Gavaras say they would accept food from Jangams though they insist that Jangams are inferior. Gavaras consider Kapus to be inferior though there is evidence of conflicting opinions on this matter in as much as some Gavaras accept food prepared by Kapus. Similarly, Pedda Kapus and Velamas are said to be equals, although Gavaras in the village accept food only from Velamas and not Pedda Kapus.

Looking at the points of view of other castes, we note that Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis, Kamsalis and Jangams consider Gavaras to be inferior and their food unacceptable. Kapus, Pedda Kapus and Velamas feel the Gavaras to be their equals in status, and all three say that on that basis they would accept food from Gavaras. All the remaining castes concede Gavara superiority and say they would accept food prepared by Gavaras.

Mangalis, the village barbers, claim to be superior to Kamsalis, Cakalis, Settigollu, Malas and Madigas, saying that they would reject food from those castes. They also say they would reject food from Vadrams, though they say they are of equal status. Mangalis thus admit inferiority to ten of the sixteen castes in the village not counting themselves. They say they would be willing to accept food from any of those ten.

Only Malas and Madigas say that Mangalis are superior to them and that they are willing to accept food from them. Settigollu and Cakalis claim to be equals of the Mangalis though they are not willing to accept food from them. The remaining twelve castes consider the Mangalis to be their inferiors.

Cakalis, who serve as washermen for the village, claim to be superior to only the Malas and Madigas. They claim equality with Vadrams, Mangalis and Settigollu. Cakalis are unwilling to accept food from Kamsalis, though they do not assert superiority over them.

Only Malas and Madigas say Cakalis are their superiors. Settigollu admit equality, though they say they would not accept food from Cakalis. All other castes consider Cakalis to be inferior and say they would refuse food prepared by them.

Settigollu (*Yata*), former toddy tappers who are now labourers and country liquor sellers, claim superiority only over Malas and Madigas. They claim equality to a large number of castes whose food they say they would refuse (with the exception of the Telukulas whose food they would accept): Komatis, Kamsalis, Telukulas, Salis, Vadrams, Mangalis and Cakalis. They concede inferiority to the Brahmans and Rajus; to their 'gurus', the Jangams; and to the four farmer castes—Gavaras, Kapus, Pedda Kapus and Velamas.
Only Malas and Madigas consider Settigollu to be superior to them and say they would accept their food. Cakalis say they are equals but would not accept food from them. All other castes in the village consider Settigollu to be their inferiors.

Malas, landless labourers (also referred to as Harijans), claim superiority over only one caste, the Madigas, though even here there are some dissenting opinions that rank Madigas as equals. Nevertheless, there are three castes from whom they say they would not accept food: Komatis, Kamsalis and Madigas. It is interesting to note that, among themselves, Malas deny the supremacy of Brahmans and Rajus. They assert that the Gollas, herders of goats and sheep in villages in the region, are the highest caste of all.[13]
No castes in the village consider Malas superior to them, and no castes say they would accept food from them.

Madigas, landless labourers (and also called Harijans though some Malas claim to be the only Harijans), claim to be superior only to Malas and say they would not accept food from Malas or Komatis. However, they also assert that they are descendants of Jambamurti (or Jambuvanta) who existed 'before Brahma, Vishnu, and Ishwara (Siva).' No castes in the village consider Madigas superior to them (though there are certain Malas who feel Madigas might be their equals in status), and no castes say they would accept food from them. (See Appendix I for the description of a few more castes.)

Since many hypothetical situations of food exchange simply never arise in normal circumstances, responses to certain questions about possible exchanges which are reflected in the above descriptions were necessarily improvised.[14] There are also individual variations in degrees of leniency in interpreting traditional customs with a trend towards relaxing them to a certain extent on an informal level.

Table 18 and the above discussion highlight the extensive degree to which there are discrepancies between castes' views of themselves and other castes' views of them. There is not a single case in which statements

a caste made about itself wholly coincide with other castes' views and practices towards it. This tendency for castes to exaggerate claims about their own position is a symptom of the dynamic, competitive element in intercaste relations. Far from being static, caste is a field of competitive conflicts and claims. While all of the castes operate on the basis of a hierarchical model, they do so competitively, trying to claim for themselves a higher position than others are usually willing to concede.

Let us examine some of the patterns which are discernible in the conflicting status claims. First are the cases of unreciprocated claims, e.g. Kamsalis and Komatis claim to be of high status (and reject most other castes' food), but other castes do not acknowledge these claims by accepting their food. When one caste cannot get another caste to accept their food, then their status remains controversial and contested. There was evidence that gradually, if their other attributes are 'high' enough (diet, customs, and economic and political influence in a region), certain castes begin to concede superiority to them, though perhaps still rejecting their food. Examples of this are the Cakalis', Malas' and Madigas' attitudes towards the Kamsalis; and the Jangams' and Madigas' attitudes towards the Komatis in the above findings based on Table 18. On the whole, the Komatis' claims are more widely substantiated than the claims made by Kamsalis (Kamsalis claim to be higher than Brahmans). Nevertheless, the Komatis' claims are considerably contested.

Another series of discrepancies arises when castes claim to be equal (*samānam*) to other castes, rather than concede undisputed inferiority or superiority. Credence to the existence of equality can be given to cases in which castes both say each other are equal and both accept each other's food (e.g Gavara-Velama, and Gavara-Kapu relations). However, in cases when one caste claims to be equal to another but the other refuses its food, we interpret this as a unilateral bid for higher status. Such is the case of the Telukulas who claim equality with the Gavaras. While there seems no basis for Telukulas to claim to be higher than Gavaras either based on food transactions or customs, they can claim equality rather than concede to being inferior. Cases in which two castes claimed to be equal to each other but rejected each other's food seem to be castes which are so close in status that neither concedes superiority to the other. This type of rivalry between castes of equal status is seen in the relations between Cakalis and Mangalis or between Malas and Madigas.

Further examination of Table 18 reveals two clusters of equality claims. These coincide with the two dietary divisions within the Shudras, those who do not eat domestic pork and those who do (see Table 16). Within each of these divisions there is the greatest overlapping of statuses, and hence the greatest possibility for competition. It is within each division

that we find the most attempts to manipulate the system through unilateral claims of equality or superiority.

Coercion and Collusion in Inter-caste Relations

We see from the above evidence that, in effect, each caste has its own view of its place among all other castes. And it can be said that there are as many views of caste hierarchy as there are castes. Castes constantly see themselves as protecting themselves from the groups below them who would, if given the opportunity, force their way into a position of equality or superiority. They guard themselves from castes below them by restricting their interaction with them, such as in food exchanges, and if possible, by dominating them economically and politically. At the same time they are often busy exerting pressure on those above them, as we have seen in the pattern of claims to higher status. The castes are constantly exerting pressure against one another.

In addition, while castes view themselves with notions of greater superiority than that evidenced in actual inter-caste transactions, they rationalise the situation as a collusion with their superiors. By publicly conceding the superiority of 'higher castes,' which they privately question among themselves, they feel there are advantages to be gained. Komatis tell each other that Settigollu are an inferior species of being (*jāti*, 'caste, species'), while the Settigollu secretly gossip about instances when vegetarian Komatis cheated and ate meat. The Settigollu say to themselves, "the Komatis are men just like us, but we will go along with their pretensions since we do not have power enough to alter our 'official' position with respect to them." At the same time, the Settigollu look upon the Harijans in much the same aloof, superior way as Komatis look upon Settigollu. But since they all uphold the 'public definition' of their interrelations, the system continues to operate. The cornerstone of this collusion is the expression of respect in symbolic forms of tribute and deference. Later we discuss how these symbolic forms become moral values through involvement in ritual symbolism.

It is interesting to note the way in which the anomalous Kamsalis fit into the picture. This caste which has refused to collude with the others suffers from collective partial ostracism by the other castes of the village who deny them conventional acknowledgement of the status they claim (e.g. only three castes accept their food). Nevertheless, the Kamsalis have a working relationship with the villagers who accord them *de facto* mid-Shudra status in most aspects of everyday life and behaviour. Kamsalis owe this to the relatively high status of their customs (diet; treatment of women; performance of *upanayanam*, sacred thread ceremony) and to the important part they play in the economic life of the farmer castes of the

village as fabricators and repairers of agricultural implements, carts, utensils, etc. The hierarchical position of the Kamsalis is remarkably anomalous despite the fact that the anomaly is created by the application of hierarchical principles.

Laxity in the Enforcement of Custom

We have looked at the problems in the categories of caste ranking. Before proceeding to examine economic relations between castes, we must note some further discrepancies in the customs of caste hierarchy. The first relates to inroads which the State-inspired ideology of egalitarianism has made on restrictions on interactions with Harijans and restrictions on caste interdining. The second is the issue of informal caste mixing in various contexts.

The relaxation of restrictions on Harijans is attributed by the villagers to the influence of a former Headman who was in fact only enforcing the new legislation of post-Independence India. Villagers recall that he forced the village barbers to begin serving Harijans for the first time. Around 1961 segregation of Harijan children in the village school was stopped. Nowadays Harijan fieldhands enter the homes of Gavara farmers (though there was a difference of opinion as to whether they would be allowed into the inner room with its deity and ancestoral shrine, the *devuḍu mūla*). This was not previously permitted.

Restrictions on caste interdining are being eroded under the influence of town standards in which caste interdining prohibitions have been widely abandoned or compromised. Interdining with friends of other castes is sometimes dismissed as merely being 'sociable' (*sosaiti-gā*, from the English word 'society'). In Yatapalem, Settigollu and Telukulas run liquor shops where Gavaras drink from the glasses used also by Settigollu and other Shudra castes. A Sali family runs a roadside tea and snack stall where Gavaras eat and drink. In Aripaka, Gavaras run several tea stalls where Rajus and Komatis take tea, and most other castes accept cooked snacks. In Yatapalem, certain Gavara families take water from a well used mainly by Harijans because it is located more conveniently to their houses. During an interview about Brahman dietary and food exchange customs, the son of the Brahman Record Keeper in Aripaka alluded to the meat-eating fad of Brahmans in towns. To his father's reply "no, we don't eat meat," he added an aside "at least not out in the open."

In numerous contexts castes informally mix without enforcing customs of caste separation. Caste distinctions between Shudras and Harijans seem weak in most work situations. Malas, Gavaras, Jangams and Settigollu all work congenially side by side. An outsider can have little idea of their relative caste statuses by observing them at work. Harijans rarely use

special forms of respect or distance when addressing Gavara farmers. Contexts of play and entertainment are occasions when castes can be seen mixing freely, though admittedly there seems to be a tendency for castes of fairly similar status to associate more frequently. Young Cakali, Mangali and Settigollu children frequently play games together and might also occasionally be joined by a Jangam but rarely by a Gavara. Other times when castes participate with each other indiscriminately are cinema-going, palmyra fruit-gathering, and cock fights. There is a tendency for free interaction to be most informal along castes in the same dietary category. In sum, castes are not as rigidly separated from each other in daily life as might be the impression from tabulations of the complex system of formal hierarchy. There is a strong emphasis on interdependence and intercaste cooperation which links the castes to one another.

Gavaras Evade Economic Domination by Superior Castes

The economically independent employer castes (Brahman, Raju, Komati, Gavara, Velama and Kapu) coincide with those who are superior in caste status. Lower castes are economically dependent on the higher castes for whom they provide services and agricultural labour. While it is true that post-Independence changes have broadened the base of the economically independent castes to include the farmer castes (Gavara, Velama, Kapu), overall hierarchical patterns have been maintained. However, there is also a significant tendency for Gavaras to evade economic domination by superior castes.

Gavara Economic Independence: Land and Loans

The Gavaras centrally dominate the village economy because of their control over land (see Table 3). Landowners' income of food grains and cash place them in a position of controlling others who depend on them to gain employment for cash or food. Compared to land, other sources of wealth, such as employment outside the village, are of secondary importance. In the past, the principal controllers of land were the higher castes of Aripaka—Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis. Farmers were dependent for three-quarters of the land they tilled upon these castes who never did any agricultural labour themselves. They employed and oversaw the farmers who worked their land or else lent it in return for a large share of the yield. Nowadays, with the farmers in more autonomous positions of ownership, these high castes have declined. They remain at the apex of their own hierarchical ties to service and labourer castes but more or less independently of the Gavaras.

Patterns of land ownership reveal that superior castes control more land and wealth than inferior castes. On the other hand, there is the apparent

paradox that the Gavara farmers are now far wealthier than the Brahmans, Rajus and Komati castes. This is mainly the result of wide-ranging changes since Indian Independence and is thus a fairly recent shift. The Gavaras are now no longer dependent upon higher castes (in the 1930s and 1940s they were heavily in debt to the Komatis). However, since the Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis have remained wealthy enough to maintain their economic independence and aloofness, the social hierarchy is not perceived to have been actually reversed. If one includes Gavaras, one could say that the highest castes still control the majority of the wealth-producing wet lands, though the wealth is now skewed in favour of the Gavaras. On their part, the Gavaras collude, paying lip-service to the superiority of Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis through the symbolic respect expressed in greeting behaviour and in interdining patterns. However, inwardly, Gavaras mostly disregard or discount the importance of these castes, whose numbers are few and who live removed in the smaller non-Gavara settlement of Aripaka, and assume a dominant role in the village's affairs with respect to the other castes.

Referring to Table 3, it can be seen that the Twice-Born and farmer castes (Brahman, Raju, Komati, Gavara, Kapu, Velama) control the majority of the land (practically 95% of wet and 89% of dry lands). Of these castes, the Gavaras own 64% of all wet lands, a holding practically six times larger than that of the next largest. Though the Rajus are the richest in terms of average holdings per household, they are far outweighed by the size and extent of Gavara holdings. The Velamas emerge as a rather strong group with relatively large holdings, though it will be recalled that they live rather dispersed (16 households in Aripaka, 12 in the peripheral satellite settlement of Nalamollu Kampalu, and one school teacher in Yatapalem). The Kapus are relatively poorer, having less net holdings and smaller average holdings per household. The Komatis' wealth lies primarily in their shops rather than land, hence they make a relatively poor showing for a high caste. Brahman holdings are not remarkably large and contrast with the Rajus who are far better off.

Land is a variable which is related to formal politics in the village (which will be discussed later at greater length). Rajus formed an electoral alliance with Velamas in Aripaka which also apparently included the Brahmans, Komatis and Kapus. They did not, however, have sufficient strength to take power from the hands of the Gavaras. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that these castes were those which owned the largest amounts of wet land. The combined total for Rajus, Brahmans, Komatis, Kapus and Velamas is 106 acres contrasted with the 223 acres of the Gavaras. That we must consider land to be a crucial element for political influence is further indicated by the fact that non-land-owning castes wield little

power, despite their large numbers. For instance, the combined population of Yatas, Malas and Madigas alone is more than that of a Brahman-Raju-Komati-Kapu alliance.

In matters of land ownership, dynamic factors operate to keep lower castes in their inferior positions. Practically any caste, if given the chance, would prefer to be landowners. There are examples of the new economic opportunities outside the village having enabled certain Settigollu and Malas to acquire land. But these new opportunities have in no way altered the overall hierarchical patterns. On the whole, the economic factors of poverty and dependence upon the Gavaras have worked to perpetuate the lower castes' inferior and subservient social status.

Let us now turn to the issue of tenancy and sharecropping. Here one might possibly expect a hierarchical pattern of higher castes having considerable numbers of dependent lower caste tenants on their lands (paying half of the crop for the right to use the land).

Aripaka Revenue Village did not have such extensive tenancy relationships in the past. In the present, tenancy relationships do not feature as a prominent form of economic relationship between castes. While Twice-Born and farmer castes do have tenancy arrangements, none is a major employer of another caste by this means.

Out of the total of land cultivated in the village (347.9 acres of wet land, 581.6 acres dry), only 14.9% of wet land (52.1 acres) and 4.8% of dry lands (28.1 acres) are involved in tenancy arrangements. If tenancy agreements between members of the same caste are discounted (Gavaras have tenancy relations predominantly among themselves—only 3 Gavaras are tenants of higher castes while all 13 of the Gavara's tenants are fellow Gavaras, the latter arrangements involving only 11.1 acres of wet and 3.5 acres of dry land), the figures for land involved in inter-caste tenancy arrangements is a meagre 39.7 wet acres (11.4%) and 22.1 dry acres (3.7%).

Nevertheless, examining the tenancy data, we note six cases of inconsistencies with respect to the maintenance of hierarchical interrelations between castes (see Table 19). Most of these can be explained as arrangements of convenience which are of such small scale that they do not present any major challenge to the maintenance of the hierarchical relations between castes. But we are forced to take note that hierarchical economic patterns are not absolute but rather 'indeterminate at the edges' when closely examined.

Let us now consider the pattern of inter-caste loan giving. Basically, hierarchical patterns are generally observable. Notable exceptions exist which contradict the status hierarchy though they pose no major threat to the overall trend. Standing out in data on loans is the dominant Gavara

TABLE 19 : INCONSISTENCIES OF HIERARCHY IN TENANCY ARRANGEMENTS

Caste	*(No. involved)*	*Are tenants of* :	*(No.)*	*On* *Wet*	*Dry*
				(acres)	
Gavara	2	Mala	2	.50	—
Gavara	2	Mangali	2	—	.80
Kapu	1	Settigollu	1	.30	—
Sali	1	Settigollu	1	—	.50

caste's tendency to preserve its economic autonomy. An important component of their power base is this self-reliant economic independence.

The village system of *tanakhā*, loan-giving, is a common form of land and cash transaction between men of different castes. In a *tanakhā* arrangement, a person gives the use of his land into the hands of someone who gives him a cash loan. The loan has to be repaid (without cash interest) by the original owner to get his land back, often within a time limit. A contrast between tenancy and *tanakhā* is that *tanakhā* is one step towards selling (since it can lead, after time, to forfeiture of claims to the land and in the meantime is in the *de facto* control of the money-giver) while tenancy land is more securely owned and of benefit to the titular land owner.

In examining a survey of *tanakhās* given and received by all households of Aripaka Revenue Village, we observe features which resemble patterns in tenancies. Firstly, there is an overall upholding of hierarchical patterns in inter-caste cases. That is to say, people tend to place their land with superior or equal castes in return for loans. However, similar to the practices observed in tenancy, *tanakhās* are predominantly arranged between fellow castemen, especially in the case of Gavaras. Out of 60 individuals to whom Gavaras lent money in return for land, 49 were fellow Gavaras, 3 were of Twice-Born castes and 6 were of inferior castes. Similarly, of the 63 Gavara recipients of *tanakhā* loans, only 14 were from non-Gavaras, divided between 6 different castes. On the other hand, there are some notable exceptions to the pattern of maintaining hierarchy, such as cases of Harijans taking wet lands from Gavaras or Rajus and giving them cash in return for it. While these exceptions are hardly numerous enough to violate the overall maintenance of hierarchy, they are evidence of inroads by the new money economy.

The Brahman, Raju, and Komati castes tend to be receivers of *tanakhā* loans rather than donors. This reflects their current state of economic weakness and continuing loss of ground to the farmer castes.

Another striking pattern is the cases of money being loaned by Harijans to Gavaras and Rajus (see Table 20). On the whole the Harijans are

TABLE 20 : HARIJAN LOANS TO GAVARAS

Loan to (Clan-name of Gavara household)	*Land taken in return (Wet)* (acres)	*Amount of Loan* (Rs.)	*Loan given by* Caste	Settlement	
Rapeti (P)	.40	2,000	Mala	A	
Saragadam 2	.70	4,500	Mala	Y	(same man)
Alla	.10	1,000	Mala	Y	
Adari	.12	600	Mala	Y	
Adari	.40	1,500	Mala	Y	
Adari	.07	500	Madiga	Y	
Adari	.13	600	Madiga	Y	
7 Recipients	1.92	10,700	5 donors		
Harijan loan to Raju					
	.40	1,200	Mala	A	

not major lenders of money and are so low in status that even being in the position of loan-givers does not place them in a superior position. However, it cannot be denied that it gives them a certain leverage. That this is happening was evidenced by an incident in which the son of a Mala of Yatapalem freely sat on a chair in the ante-chamber serving as the village post office in an important Raju's house in Aripaka. Ordinary Gavara farmers would only enter there with a certain trepidation and certainly would not be so bold as to sit on a chair as if equal to a Raju (though Gavara officers of the village would have had no compunctions about doing so). The reason for a warm welcome of this Mala man by the Raju was that he worked in the merchant marine earning high pay and frequently going abroad. The Raju was interested in having him buy an elaborate short wave transistor radio. Traditional caste status distance was waived, ironically, in a quest to enhance the Raju's own personal status (much prestige attaches to the possession of such a radio). The same Mala man, through similar strategies, managed to have Gavara backing, from those indebted to him, when his caste Headman in the village, with whom he was in fierce competition over land, opposed his third remarriage. The caste Headman opposed the marriage on the ground that the caste elders (namely himself) had not been consulted or included in the wedding 'search party.' The wedding took place nevertheless and was attended by Gavaras

(especially those whose lands he held) which was no mean feat since the pattern of marriage attendance parallels the patterns of food acceptance, i.e. higher castes rarely attend weddings of lower caste people. When they do, it bestows great prestige on the family holding the wedding.

The pattern of Gavaras taking and giving loans predominantly among themselves is also discernible in data on agricultural loans from town jaggery merchants. We find here the key to Gavara economic dominance in the Anakapalli region. Gavara farmers and Gavara businessmen mutually support each other and gain strength and autonomy in this way. Among Gavaras, approximately 50% of all households take loans from the Anakapalli jaggery merchants known as Commission Agents (*ṣaukārlu*). These agents give the farmers fertilizer and cash loans for the coming year at 1.5% interest, compounded monthly. The farmers are then under an obligation to sell their jaggery through their Commission Agent who deducts his interest as well as a 6% commission on the sale (3% of which is government tax).

Families not taking such loans are frequently either poorer (without land suitable for sugar-cane) or richer than average (possessing their own capital). Of the Gavara households which take loans from Anakapalli Commission Agents, 85% receive loans from just two agents, both of whom are Gavaras (see Table 21). Although the villagers said they had no special preference for Gavara merchants over Komatis (Komatis form 50% of the loan-giving merchant houses in Anakapalli), and commented that the Gavara merchants were perhaps less trustworthy in their trade practices, in actual fact only 2 out of 89 loans were made by Komati merchants to Gavara farmers of Aripaka Revenue Village in 1971 (see Table 21).

TABLE 21: LOANS TO GAVARAS BY ANAKAPALLI COMMISSION AGENTS (1971)

Particulars	*Number of borrowers from each agent*	*Total amount loaned by each agent* (Rs.)
Gavara agents : 1	47	25,430
2	30	13,470
3	7	4,000
4	3	1,600
Komati agents : 1	1	800
2	1	500
Total	89 loans made	45,800

The reason for this clustering is that villagers prefer to deal with merchants with whom others, known to them, have had successful transactions. Credit-worthy villagers sometimes vouch for fellow villagers to enable them to get loans. On their part, merchants find it advantageous to loan to several members of the same village since it enables them to put pressure on defaulters through their other clients and caste connections.

The fascinating story of the rise of the Gavaras in the economic life of Anakapalli is directly associated with the tendency of village Gavaras to turn to their own caste for loans. It also closely resembles the means by which the Gavaras became economically autonomous of the higher castes in the village. Within the 30 years between 1930-1960, the Gavaras of Anakapalli made remarkable inroads into the commercial side of the jaggery trade which had previously been a Komati monopoly. The Gavaras nowadays recount how they began as labourers (*kalāsi*) in the market yard unloading incoming bullock carts and weighing the graded blocks of jaggery. However, the process by which they managed to infiltrate the market (to the point of controlling half the seats in the influential Anakapalli Merchants Association) was more essentially a matter of loan-giving activity. The Gavaras started at the bottom of the hierarchical chain of middlemen who operated between the Commission Agents and the farmers. The Komati Commission Agents loaned money to farmers on the condition that they sell the resulting jaggery to them. The money was received by the farmers either directly from the Commission Agents or through 'brokers', middlemen between the farmers and the big Commission Agents. In both cases the Gavaras had the opportunity of interposing themselves in the chain of money-lending since they worked as clerks (*gumastā*), check-up agents employed by Commission Agents, and as brokers.

Several factors contributed to their success in entering the chain of middlemen in this way. The first was the willingness of the Komatis to let others do their 'dirty work.' This stemmed partially from the prevailing attitude that it is an attribute to high status to do as little of one's own work as possible. By contrast, the Gavaras saw nothing wrong with doing all the work themselves. It is indeed ironic that contradictions in the caste hierarchy (i.e. lower status Gavaras challenging the economic superiority of the higher Komatis) were facilitated by the symbolic values of hierarchy which viewed 'non-work' as a high status attribute. In addition to this, the Gavara middlemen had other advantages over Komatis which derived from their dealing with village farmers who were their fellow castemates.

The Komatis experienced economic difficulties in the 1930s as part of the repercussions of the worldwide economic depression. This coincided with the successful rise of the Gavara middlemen and brokers who took advantage of their increasingly improving and successful situation to buy

out merchant houses on the jaggery market yard and become full-fledged Commission Agents. Gavaras came to occupy half of the seats on the wholesale market floor and gained a proportionate influence in the Merchants' Association, both of which had hitherto been exclusive Komati preserves. Eventually Gavaras also became 'Export Commission Agents,' merchants who exported jaggery to other states such as Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. But even at this stage they did not emulate the Komati tendency to delegate responsibilities to outside middlemen to maintain their business contacts. This process of brokers working their way up through the system of middlemen (starting out with borrowed money) is still at work.

The Limitations of Jajmani Ties

Apart from employing labourers on their lands, the Gavara farmers are the principal employers of the castes who provide specialised services and crafts. The Gavaras are thus the primary source of food grains and cash which circulate in the village economy between the lower castes themselves. Of all the specialised service castes, Barbers (Mangali), Washermen (Cakali) and Carpenters (Kamsali) stand out as having particularly stable relations with specific employer families. These arrangements have been called the 'Jajmani System' in anthropological writings on India (Wiser 1969).[15] Although these ties are thought of as annual arrangements with the pay calculated by the year, they tend to be permanent and hereditary. From the data in Table 22 we see that the 12 carpenter families of the village (6 in Yatapalem, 6 in Aripaka) are each attached on the average to 14 landowner families (mainly Gavara but also Raju, Komati, Velama, Kapu etc.). The seven Barber households (all live in Yatapalem) have an average of 38 households which they serve. Ten Washerman households (6 in Yatapalem, 3 in Kottapalem, 1 in Aripaka) service about 30 households each. It is a feature of the shared economic field of Aripaka Revenue Village that the Barber families who live exclusively in Yatapalem have the barbering rights and duties for inhabitants of Aripaka and all its other affiliated settlements.

Carpenters, Barbers and Washermen are generally paid in kind by most Gavara farmers and other landowning castes. Poorer Gavara individuals who do not have regular dealings with carpenters pay in cash for an odd job such as the construction of a bed-frame. Forms of payment made by other castes to these specialist service castes are more varied. Some pay in cash for each job done, or in cash on an annual basis, in addition to the annual payments in kind mentioned above.

Let us examine the data on service caste-employer caste ties in Table 22. We note the very high occurrence of payment in kind when the ties

TABLE 22 : FORMS OF PAYMENTS TO SERVICE CASTES
(In numbers of households; excludes households that pay in cash by the job)

Caste	*Total number of households in the caste*	*Medium of pay to Carpenter-Blacksmith (Kamsali)*			*Medium of pay to Barber (Mangali)*			*Medium of pay to Washerman (Cakali)*		
		K	*M*	*Rs.*	*K*	*M*	*Rs.*	*K*	*M*	*Rs.*
Brahman	8	—	—	—	1	—	—	5	—	1
Raju	10	2	—	—	2	—	—	6	—	—
Komati	10	—	—	—	1	—	3	4	—	2
Gavara	173	120	—	1	128	—	6	143	—	8
Kapu	23	10	—	—	14	—	—	19	—	1
Pedda Kapu	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	—	—
Velama	29	22	—	—	25	—	1	27	—	—
Golla	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kamsali	12	—	—	—	2	4	4	5	—	6
Jangam	4	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	2
Telukula	6	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	3
Sali	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Vadram	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Mangali	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	—
Cakali	2	—	—	—	1	6	—	—	—	—
Settigollu	49	11	—	—	15	—	2	26	—	20
Mala	28	2	—	—	—	—	—	17	—	7
Madiga	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	3
Mixed caste	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Total	389	170	0	1	193	11	17	262	4	56
		K + *Rs.* = 171			*K* + *M* + *Rs.* = 22			*K* + *M* + *Rs.* = 322		

K = annual pay in kind (grain); *M* = mutual exchange of services; *Rs.* = annual pay in cash.

are long-term ones (see Table 23). The somewhat lower figure for Washermen is due to the greater number of households they serve, which means that they deal with more poor families who do not have enough grain to spare to pay them in kind. Payment in kind is thus associated with the interrelations of castes which are hierarchical in the least ambiguous degree (except for Carpenters who are ambiguous because of their controversial claim to being higher than Brahmans). Later we shall see that rituals emphasise the hierarchical connotations of relations with Barbers and Washermen in particular and of payment in kind in general.

From Table 24 we note that there are considerable differences in the percentages of households (of all castes) which maintain long-term ties with the three service castes under consideration. The Carpenters have the lowest figure because they serve a much smaller number of households (only land owners engaged in agriculture). The Barbers, despite the broader spread of castes they serve which more closely resembles that of the Washerman (see Table 22), still have a low figure since they have fewer long-term ties and more dealings in cash. Washermen serve the greatest number of castes and households on a long-term basis in comparison to the Carpenters and Barbers (see Table 22).

TABLE 23 : VILLAGE HOUSEHOLDS USING PAYMENT IN KIND FOR LONG-TERM TIES WITH SERVICE CASTES

(in percent)

Particulars	*Payment to*		
	Carpenters	*Barbers*	*Washermen*
In kind	99.4	91.8	82.6
In cash	.6	8.2	17.4
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

TABLE 24 : VILLAGE HOUSEHOLDS HAVING LONG-TERM TIES TO SERVICE CASTES

(in percent)

Particulars	*Ties with*		
	Carpenters	*Barbers*	*Washermen*
Have long-term ties	43.2	56.6	82.1
Do not have long-term ties	56.8	43.4	17.9
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

To summarise our findings we see that while a jajmani form is in operation, it is not very prominent. Jajmani ties are limited to only three castes, and the proportion of households which do not maintain such long-term ties even with these is substantial. Only ties with a single caste, the Washermen, can be said to exhibit the ideal jajmani pattern (a high proportion of households maintaining long-term ties and paying them in kind). If we view the long-term factor as an element of stability in hierarchy (analogous to other fixed hierarchical relations between castes), then the absence of widespread networks of long-term ties indicates a more fluid set of relationships, less rigidly hierarchical.

We can even find tensions in hierarchical relations between castes linked by long-term ties. In the long-term relationship of service caste employee with his employer, behaviour is observed which resembles the patterns of dynamic pressure and coercion which we observe within the caste hierarchy. This takes the form of employers delaying payments and using occasions when service castes beg for their pay to complain about bad service (e. g. cases of Washermen who do not bring clothes back promptly, Barbers who visit too infrequently, and Carpenters who do not finish work they are commissioned to do). On their part, service castes have monopolies over their trades and can purposely cause delay if they are dissatisfied by the treatment of their employers, though it is usually clear that the service caste is economically subordinate to its employers. Even so, at the time of payment they frequently reject the first offer made by their employers. They appeal to the employer's obligation to them to force a larger payment. Such haggling over pay is generally expected and employers anticipate refusals of their first offers. This dynamic tension seems to be an essential ingredient in the relationship. Each side appeals to the others' obligations and indebtedness towards it. Mere pay for work is less important than this emphasis on mutual interdependence.

A final word should be added about the maintenance of caste statuses in the context of economic and service relations. Barbers and Washermen are clearly among the lowest ranking Shudras. Since, as we maintain, subordinate social status is implied by a long-term service relationship, there is a problem in their serving Harijans. We find, however, that Barbers maintain no long-term ties with Harijans. Washermen do wash clothes for Harijans, but avoid status reversal by insisting that the Harijans carry their own clothes out to the washing areas and back. Carpenters cannot manipulate their status quite so neatly. There is really no way they can reconcile their claim to be superior to Brahmans with their service relationship with the Shudra farmers. Their service relationships preclude them from demonstrating the superiority they claim and leave them in an anomalous position.

Gavaras Evade Political Domination by Superior Castes

We shall consider here two aspects of the political interrelations of castes, the pattern of 'informal' intercaste dispute settlement by elders, and the configuration of formal political officers in the village. In the informal political sphere the adjudication of disputes is strongly influenced by the power relations between the castes involved (in particular, lower castes are coerced by higher castes but employ counter-strategies). In the formal political sphere, too, we find competitive tensions between castes, especially at times of elections. We also note the centrality of the Gavara farmers who now exercise political dominance in the village, though they had previously been subordinate to members of the Brahman, Komati, and particularly Raju castes.

Hierarchy in Inter-caste Dispute Settlements

All observed instances of intercaste dispute settlement were cases in which Shudra or Harijan castes, clearly subordinate to Gavaras, appealed to Gavara elders. Gavaras were never appealed to by Velamas or Kapus, who consider themselves to be roughly equal in status. Though Aripaka Kapus occasionally appealed to Rajus, Gavaras never appealed to any caste they considered to be higher than themselves. Insoluble cases were referred to God in a trial by ordeal.

There are basically two situations in which disputes come under the jurisdiction of a higher caste. The first is when disputes which occur within a particular caste reach deadlock. The second is when there are disputes between several castes. Let us consider three actual cases. In the first two, internal caste disputes are appealed to the higher-caste Gavaras. In the third, the Gavaras could not settle a dispute among themselves but avoided the same sort of appeal to higher castes.

(*i*) *Marital dispute of Settigollu: Gavara elders reinforce the authority of elder Settigollu males*

Gavaras were asked to mediate for some Kottapalem Settigollu in a *tagu* (or *taguvu*) which took place under some trees near Mallolla Pakalu. A woman had gone to her mother's house and had refused to return to her husband (who happened to be her father's sister's son). She insisted that she wanted a divorce. Since the couple had a child, it was unlikely that the elders would grant a divorce. It appeared as though the request for a divorce was the wife's way of applying pressure to force her husband to form a household separate from his mother.

At the meeting there were four Settigollu 'settling men' (*tagu manuṣulu*), and seven Gavara elders (*peddalu, tagu manuṣulu*) including the Panchayat President and Vice President. Also present were many Settigollu

of Kottapalem. The Gavara elders resolved that the couple should be kept together. They placed their authority and weight behind the woman's father's elder brother (her own father was dead) and instructed him to inform them within the month as to his decisions. If any of the concerned relatives did not comply and send the woman back to her husband, they threatened to hold another meeting and impose punishments.

(*ii*) *A case of rivalry between two Mala families: Gavara elders support the traditional caste head*

Another example of an internal caste dispute which was referred to Gavara elders was a fight between Yatapalem Malas (Harijans). It was ostensibly only a fight incited by name-calling in which one younger man (who is normally outside the village working in the merchant marine) hit his next door neighbour, the Mala 'caste headman' (*ijamāni*). When the fight broke out numerous Gavara elders were called and hurried over to the Harijan quarter to break up the fight and arbitrate.

A hundred rupee fine was imposed on the younger man, half to be given to the Rama temple and half to be given to the caste head who had been hit. The caste head said he did not want any of that money and that it should all be given to the Rama temple. This gesture masked the fact that the conflict was the result of economic competition over buying a plot of land. The caste head had been paying a Gavara family in instalments when the fellow, who worked in the merchant marine and had a large outside income, snatched the land out from under his nose by paying three times the price.

There had been other incidents of quarrels over the ownership of trees between their adjacent houses. The seaman had also defied the caste head in arranging a divorce and second marriage without the consent of the caste elders. (Fellow caste members consequently boycotted his second marriage ceremony.) The fact that the fine had been as high as 100 rupees represented censure of the seaman using his money to defy the traditional caste authorities.

(*iii*) *Insoluble case of a poisoning accusation within the Gavara caste: resort is made to a trial by ordeal*

The one instance in which a conflict within the Gavara caste was unresolveable was handled by a trial by ordeal. The case concerned an accusation that a relative had poisoned a water buffalo (there was competition between relatives of a wealthy man who were each seeking his allegiance and favours). When nothing could be determined from witnesses or evidence the elders of the caste decided to hold an ordeal. The accused woman had to enter the village Rama temple and put out

a lamp after swearing before God that she was innocent. If she were lying, and the villagers seemed convinced that she was, it was expected that she or close members of her family would become stricken by some dire illness and die. (That this did not immediately happen prompted some to comment *kali yugam!*, a reference to the current era in Hindu mythology, a time of corruption, and declining morality.)

To sum up, the decisions in these cases always backed the hierarchical authority of elder males, or in cases of tit-for-tat reprisals, stressed the need for consensus between interdependent kinsmen. The case of the ordeal was similarly an appeal to higher powers to back the moral order. However, by resorting to the Lord Rama rather than a higher caste, the Gavaras ensured their autonomy in the village social hierarchy.

Coercion in Inter-Caste Dsputes

Though intercaste dispute settlement sessions have the ostensible purpose of harmonising social relations, in many cases there is a tendency for the dominant caste coercively to impose its authority upon lower castes. Gavaras explicitly acknowledge that justice must be done even if the guilty party is a Gavara and his accuser of lower caste. This tends to be mere payment of lipservice to ideal principles. In reality, payment of damages to lower castes was never seen to occur.

However, the lower castes have a form of counter-strategy. They can appeal to the ideal of justice by causing a public commotion. We have already noted that women resort to such tactics in order to exert pressure on men. A commotion and the public glare to which it subjects the conflicting parties are weapons which an inferior can use against a superior. It derives its potency from the assumption that interdependent obligations exist between hierarchical unequals. It alleges that these obligations are not being properly fulfilled. Since public wrangling is not resorted to lightly, the implication is that the superior must be at least partially responsible. This manipulation of public opinion constitutes a form of pressure and censure which inferiors can use against superiors.

During the course of fieldwork there were numerous occasions of Gavaras mistreating pigs belonging to Settigolu. Settigollu have sheds for their pigs and feed them but let them roam about freely in the village most of the time. There were incidents when Gavara farmers beat pigs belonging to Settigollu which had strayed on to their lands. The beatings were particularly severe and sometimes took place suspiciously far from the fields which allegedly had been trespassed. On other occasions baby pigs were killed by dogs belonging to Gavaras. In neither of these types of incidents were Settigollu able to have the farmers restrained or made to compensate them for the loss of their animals.

In this context, an incident occurred in which a Settigollu's pigs were poisoned:

> Two pigs, a pregnant sow and a baby, died in the night and were allegedly found near the field huts of a particular farmer. They had died from insecticide poisoning. It was known that the farmer had threatened to poison this Settigollu's pigs, complaining that they often drank from his cattle troughs. The Settigollu owner first appealed for arbitration from a passing Raju schoolmaster from Aripaka. He declined to become involved saying he was a mere schoolmaster. Meanwhile several Gavara 'big men' gathered, including the Panchayat President. But nothing could be done since the accused farmer was in Anakapalli on a buying trip.
> The farmer finally returned in the evening, after another pig had died bringing the total value of the loss to about Rs. 100. A large boisterous crowed formed accompanied by heated arguments, accusations, and shouting by Settigollu women. A collection of Gavara 'big men' seated themselves on a stone wall while the Settigollu caste head (*ijamāni*) stood in front of them with the pig owner and the accused farmer. The gathering had a fairly informal and fluid structure with different people wandering in and expressing their opinions on the periphery. Various circles of controversy grew and subsided. First, the Settigollu said he would abide by the judgement of his panchayat ward head and then he threatened to go to the police. He appealed for support from the Panchayat Vice President. The Vice President then told the accused farmer, a fellow Gavara, that it was his duty to interrogate him and commented that it was widely known that he had threatened to poison the pigs. The charge was hotly denied by the farmer.
> Finally the Settigollu said he would drop all charges if the farmer would only admit having done it. In order to make a mockery of the Settigollu's request a relative of the accused farmer said he did it. For lack of witnesses and substantial evidence, the meeting degenerated into small circles of elders and Settigollu and eventually the farmer walked away and the public commotion and hubhub faded out. Ultimately, the Settigollu did not go to the police and the farmer admitted no guilt. However, the public accusation and commotion itself served partially as the Settigollu's retribution though it did not compensate for his loss of the market value of his pigs. The fact that the public condemnation was sufficient for him was evidenced by the apparent cordiality and absence of hostility with which the Settigollu and farmer subsequently behaved.

This case illustrates that Gavaras have the power to coerce lower castes

into submission. But it also shows that there are limits. Higher castes are obligated to appear to deal justly with lower castes, and lower castes feel they have a moral claim to fair treatment. Yet again we see a situation in which reciprocity and dynamic tension play a part in defining the relationship between inferiors and superiors.

Inter-Caste Rivalry for Political Office

In the bureaucracy linked with the Tahsildar and District Collectorate, the Record Keeper (*karṇam*) is a Brahman of Aripaka, the headman (*munsif*) is a Gavara (of the Rapeti clan) of Yatapalem, and the Village Servant (*bārki*) is a Mala, Harijan of Aripaka. These three are always seen working together as a team. Their job specialisations reflect structures of caste interdependence which underlie the *varṇa* ideology of caste hierarchy. The Brahman does the clerical tasks, the Gavara is the ruling authority, and the Mala does the physical labour and footwork. When collecting taxes in Yatapalem, the Record Keeper and the Headman sit on the covered verandah (*maṇḍapam*) of the temple and the Village Servant is sent, authoritatively with bamboo staff in hand, to summon farmers to them.

The fact that the Record Keeper is a Brahman and lives in Aripaka, seems to be significant for the residents of Aripaka—not to feel that they are totally dominated from what they consider to be an outlying hamlet of Gavaras. The Record Keeper's house in Aripaka is a centre of activity and communication for the entire revenue village. Aripaka Rajus and Komatis keep close contact with the affairs of the village through the Record Keeper, a fellow Twice-Born caste member. For his part, the Record Keeper manages to maintain an apparently neutral stance, intermediate between the Gavaras and Rajus. A further tie of Yatapalem and the Gavaras with Aripaka is the Headman's habit of frequently going to Aripaka to sit and gossip at the roadside teastalls or to consult with the Record Keeper. There is no doubt, however, that the headmanship and its prerogative is in the hands of the Gavaras (of Yatapalem and Mallolla Pakalu).

The role of the Village Servant in terms of integrating the Harijans of Aripaka to the rest of the village is not insignificant. Malas appreciate the authority vested in one of their members, and even occasionally give an alternative name of their caste as *bārkīlu*, the caste of the *bārkīs*, in an apparent attempt to imply that the importance of this post attaches to all the caste's members. (This parallels the reference to the farmers as *naiḍḍu*, *naiḍus*, 'bosses' or 'big men.') Harijans might be low in the status hierarchy but nevertheless have their own important role.

The posts in the panchayat system give further opportunities for groups

and settlements to express their integration. Both the President and Vice President are Gavaras, but the former lives in Mallolla Pakalu and is of the Malla clan, while the latter lives in Yatapalem and is of the Rapeti clan. The President spends much time in Aripaka with the circle of people who gather at the tea stalls there which include Rajus, Komatis, Velamas, the Headman, and the Record Keeper.

The integrative aspect of the village officers is not necessarily planned or intentional. However, it highlights the fact that the several hamlets of the village operate more or less effectively as a single unit with a single set of political authorities. At the same time, each successive exercise of power and authority strengthens and reinforces their legitimacy and is viewed by the villagers as proof of the interdependence of the settlements. Disregarding the historical background of the development of the various settlements, their integration into a single unit is sustained by their designation as a single revenue village by the government authorities.

Times of elections, however, are generally occasions for intercaste rivalry. Mention has already been made that members of different castes competed for the Munsif qualifying examination (a Brahman, a Velama and a mixed-caste man). In 1969, elections for Panchayat representatives and selection of the village Panchayat president had given rise to a Raju-Velama alliance against the Gavaras. The result of this was that the Gavaras who had hitherto been internally divided, immediately closed ranks. Due to their overwhelmingly superior numbers and economic influence, the Gavaras won the election.

These Raju-Gavara rivalries surfaced again when there were State and National Elections (elections for Member of Parliament in Delhi, in March 1971; elections for member of the State Legislative Assembly in February 1972). On the occasion of the 1971 election, an Aripaka Raju managed to interpose himself between the villagers and the agents of one of the candidates. The Gavaras resented his setting himself up as the representative of the village. Rumours circulated that he had accepted bribes from the politician to 'deliver' the village. There were also allegations that the Raju had prevented the candidate from visiting Yatapalem when he visited Aripaka. The result was that the Gavaras voted solidly for the rival candidate who many believed stood less of a chance of winning the election. Indeed he did lose. Rumours circulated that perhaps the victorious candidate would learn that he had not been supported by Aripaka Revenue Village and would henceforth withhold economic favours he might otherwise have bestowed upon them. From the Gavaras' point of view, it was preferable to have discredited the Raju's claim of influence in the village.

He did not give up his attempts, however. The son of the winning candi-

date went on a tour of the area and stopped in Aripaka to thank the voters for electing his father, the former Maharaja of Vizianagaram. The Raju specially prepared a petition to request money for enlargement of the village school. The petition, which was translated into English and typed, was written in a highly ornate, effusive style. It alluded to the former glories of the Maharaja's family and its charitable works. The petition was signed solely by the Raju who styled himself 'School Committee President'.

In the next election (for the State Legislative Assembly in 1972), the same Raju-Gavara polarization was not in evidence. The President of the Panchayat Samiti (the assembly of village panchayat presidents) endorsed a candidate who was duly supported by the President of Aripaka Revenue Village and others eager to curry his favour. This time the candidate visited Yatapalem where he gave a speech from the platform of the village temple. Included in the circle of dignitaries who greeted the candidate was the same Raju. Though it seemed to suit everyone to have him present on that occasion, his aims of challenging Gavara political ascendency were not forgotten. The Rajus, for their part, were not content to remain passive as the formerly subordinate Gavaras now wielded political control.

It is notable that the caste of a political candidate is of secondary importance to his personal patronage network. In the 1971 election the Gavaras of Yatapalem voted for a candidate who was a Brahman, not because of caste alignments in the region but because of caste rivalries within the village. Similary, in the 1972 election, one candidate was a Brahman and another a Raju. Everyone in the village, including the Aripaka Raju, readily supported the Brahman candidate by virtue of the endorsement of the Panchayati Samiti President (a Kapu). Thus, in the second election, the Raju was not backing 'a fellow Raju' but, like everyone else, was out to establish his influence and link with a politician whose success was most likely.

Admittedly, caste is a potential way of establishing influence if it can be exploited. For example, in his petition to the touring son of the successful Raju candidate of 1971, the Aripaka Raju identified with the former Maharaja of Vizianagaram as a fellow Raju, and purposely signed it with his own unmistakably Raju name. However, on the whole, the caste of a candidate is not automatically a significant issue. For the Aripaka Raju, there was much greater political potential in a Brahman endorsed by their mutual friend, the Block Panchayat President, than with a Raju with whom he had less promising ties.

The Contradiction of Government Egalitarianism

Since Independence, the State Government has increased its influence as a source of educational, economic and political opportunities. As such,

the ideology according to which it functions exerts increasing influence in the village. On numerous occasions, villagers express opinions that rural village life (*palleṭūru*) is inferior to the sophisticated 'civilised' ways of the town (*nāgarikata, nāgarikam*), though they also criticise the crowds and dirtiness of towns. Of particular interest is the State's emphasis on egalitarianism and its ideological opposition to hierarchical caste customs associated with restrictions on interdining and intermarriage. Interdining restrictions seem to have weakened most under the impact of this new ideology. Interdining restrictions are now violated by villagers when they go to towns and surreptitiously in contexts outside the home.

The equality of opportunity to which the State is ideologically committed has resulted in the cracking of the monopoly of wealth and power of the traditional Twice-Born elite, the Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis. The extension of elective politics (e.g. in the village Panchayat system) has given new groups influence which they previously lacked. Removal of caste restrictions has opened the door to employment and educational opportunities. Harijans now have access to the coveted jobs in the government bureaucracy (post office, railways, educational system, health service, Visakhapatnam harbour authority). For instance, among the salaried government school-masters in the village are a Gavara, a Golla and a Relli (Harijan), in addition to a Brahman and a Raju. Several Gavaras of the village work outside it as government clerks, and one is a Village Level Worker in the Block development scheme.

The new opportunities created by the State, with its anti-caste and egalitarian ideology, have introduced the possibility of conflicting status hierarchies. A government employed school master was assigned to Yatapalem village school. He took up residence in the village and rented a room in a Gavara farmer's house. As an educated man he was treated with great respect by the villagers. After a number of weeks, rumours circulated that he was from a very low caste. Eventually, it came out that he was a Relli, a Harijan caste with origins in Orissa. Rellis are active in fruit marketing in the district. Some Gavaras complained to the owner of the house in which the teacher rented his room. They opposed his living in a Gavara house. The wife of the houseowner replied that she had no objection to him. He prepared and ate his meals by himself and was a good tenant. Two of her sons were attending the school at which he taught, and he gave them extra tutoring in the evenings.

Within about two months a pretext was found for expressing dissatisfaction with this man of a low status caste in the high status (and, by village standards, well-paying) job of assistant schoolmaster. Post-funerary ceremonies were taking place in honour of the Headman of the village who had recently died. The teacher sat in a chair on a verandah over-

looking the courtyard where many Gavara elders and 'big men' had assembled. The teacher's confident sitting in a chair above the level of the elders was felt by many to be an arrogant impertinence. Subsequently, rumour had it that requests might be sent to the government to have the teacher transferred out of the village and replaced. The teacher himself wrote to ask to be moved closer to his home village. These requests were never granted, and the teacher was then in the uncomfortable position of being stuck in a rather inhospitable village. The number of people who had been informally friendly with him seemed to dwindle. He had little contact with the village Harijans as he was neither a Mala nor a Madiga himself. Ultimately, he remained in the village unhampered in his official duties and constituted living proof that the egalitarian values of the government bureaucracy overrode traditional caste status. However, for the teacher himself, being in the midst of two conflicting hierarchies was a distinctly unenviable position.

In further considering the possible impact of education on traditional power relations we took a survey of literacy and schooling among castes in the village (see Table 25). The results show the differential degree to which they have taken advantage of educational opportunities. Gavaras are far behind the Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis in literacy and in the proportion of their caste members who go on to study at the secondary school level in Subbavaram. It seems only by virtue of sheer numbers that Gavaras have as many well-educated males as those three castes. Lower castes fare even worse at the level of secondary education. It is possible that wealth enables the pursuit of higher education. But government scholarships and assistance have helped two Malas to go on to gain higher education.

SUMMARY OF TENSIONS AND RIVALRIES IN VILLAGE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

We stated at the beginning of this book that the ritual life of the village mediates discrepancies between the society's formal structures and various built-in conflicts which arise within them. Before we examine ritual in Part 2, it will be useful here to summarise these discrepancies, tensions, conflicts, and rivalries.

We have noted that women wield influence in numerous spheres challenging the structural principle that husbands have authority over wives—a principle reinforced by the age differential between men and women at marriage. We saw that Gavara women actively participate in marketing, disputes and household decision-making. We observed a significant degree of marital instability among Gavaras, often initiated by wives. We also discovered a high incidence of widowhood—a consequence of the age

TABLE 25 : RATES OF LITERACY IN ARIPAKA REVENUE VILLAGE

(Individuals above five years old)

Caste or clan	*Number of males literate*	*Percentage of male literacy*	*Percentage of female literacy*	*Highly educated males (8 years or more)*	*Highly educated as percentage of literate males*	*Total male population of caste or clan*
Brahman	16	100	79	6	37.5	16
Raju	14	100	50	7	50.0	14
Komati	22	100	67	3	13.6	22
Gavara	119	34	5	17	4.9	342
Malla	14	40	6	4	11.4	35
Rapeti	30	50	14	5	8.3	60
Saragadam	31	26	n.a.	5	4.2	119
Velama	17	24	0	3	4.2	70
Kapu	18	40	5	6	13.6	44
P. Kapu	0	0	0	0	0.0	3
Jangam	4	80	0	0	0.0	5
Kamsali	20	69	15	0	0.0	29
Telukula	4	57*	10*	1*	14.2	7
Vadram	1	50	0	0	0.0	2
Sali	0	0	0	0	0.0	3
Mangali	2	25	0	0	0.0	8
Cakali	0	0	0	0	0.0	13
Settigollu	20	33	0	2	3.3	60
Mala	5	11	0	2	4.4	45
Madiga	2	10	0	0	0.0	21

*A teacher and his educated wife skewed these figures from 50%, 0%, 0.

differential at marriage—which is believed to threaten the well-being of husbands and households. The ideology of *āśa* provides further evidence that women are perceived to pose potential threats to male dominance by holding that females are more emotional, passionate and attached to the world than men.

There are also divisive tendencies among Gavara kinsmen. Household unity is disrupted by rivalry between brothers, especially after they marry and their father dies. Sub-clans eventually separate once they grow large, and when men without male heirs arrange uxorilocal marriages for their daughters, new clans are often introduced into the village, which grow apart from the original clan. Uxorilocal marriage also weakens the authority of a husband over his wife. Some families even defy conventions of clan exogamy when pursuing advantageous alliances with other families. Through time there appears to have been a trend for wealth and influence to shift away from the numerically predominant Saragadam clan, the earliest Gavara settlers of Yatapalem, to the newly prosperous Malla clan.

Despite an ideology of caste unity among Gavaras, we observed that wealth skews the authority of elders. For instance, in publicly arbitrated disputes, we found that the elders who actually wielded authority were generally those who were wealthy or powerful.

In recent times, elective politics has worked to undermine the principle of seniority as a basis for political authority. Young men can now gain positions of power over their elders.

Relationships between castes are fraught with underlying rivalries. Despite a consensus that castes are hierarchically ranked, each caste has its own version of what its position is and should be. Many castes do not accept the status claims of other castes. Kamsalis and Komatis are the most conspicuous examples of castes whose positions are disputed, but clusters of claims to equality or superiority can be found at most levels of the caste hierarchy.

We also observed that jajmani-type relations in the village that might be expected to cement castes in hierarchical economic ties are the exception rather than the rule. Hierarchy is not strictly observed in land ownership either. While, on the whole, landholding castes are superior to landless castes, the Gavaras form an exception. Their land ownership gives them economic autonomy from higher castes. However, since those castes—the Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis—have their own land, wealth and education they are not subordinate to the Gavaras.

The Gavaras' independent economic position in the village and the region is reflected in their behaviour in dispute settlement and in the political domain. They avoid appealing to higher castes even if a dispute is insoluble, and they compete vigorously with the higher castes—Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis—to maintain dominance in electoral politics.

Finally, there is evidence of rivalry in the relationships between settlements in the revenue village. The tendency to split off and found new settlements is linked to a competitive spirit between castes and between Gavara clans. The Settigollu founded separate hamlets to avoid social

situations in which they have to assume subordinate roles. The Gavara clan, the Malla, moved to a separate 'suburb' partly as an expression of their superiority to their fellow Gavaras.

NOTES

1. *Tega* derives from *teguṭa* 'to cut off' in the sense of divide, and *kōva* implies 'a string,' e.g. of beads.

2. *Cakra* alludes to the *cakram*, discus weapon and attribute of Vishnu.

3. *Aikyamatam*, 'unity'.

4. Step-mothers are not believed to take very good care of their husband's children from previous marriages.

5. Just as with actual siblings, the particular terms used are determined by the criterion of age relative to the speaker : *tammuḍu*, 'younger brother'; *anna*, 'elder brother', etc.

6. Reckoning these is spoken of as 'determining *vāyuvarśua*.'

7. As already noted, sharing the Saragadam clan name in the village are several lineages that consider each other not to be traceably related. We have arbitrarily designated them here by numbers for ease of description. They have nick-names in the village as follows : Saragadam 1, *ayappagōru uṇḍi*; Saragadam 2, *naiḍōru uṇḍi*; and Saragadam 3, *poṭṭōḷḷu uṇḍi*.

8. Jaggery production figures in Table 12 were arrived at by a survey of the number of moulds, *dimma*, which each household estimated it sold in the most recent year. 1 *dimma* = 10 kg approx.; price of a *dimma* fluctuated between Rs. 6 and Rs. 15; in the above chart the figure of Rs. 10 was used. If this was too high it would still not affect the relative places of the various families. Values of raw cane are even more approximate—estimating the yield of one ton of cane to be 12 *dimma* = 120 kg.

9. The Carpenters (Kamsali caste) of Yatapalem also perform an investiture with the sacred thread. The Sali (weavers) said members of their caste in other villages do too, though not in Yatapalem.

10. Interviewees exclaimed, '*ci-cē*!', an expression of disgust.

11. *Takkuva*, 'inferior,' *yekkuva*, 'superior.'

12. There is a caste of itinerant bards, the Runjulu, attached to the Kamsalis. They live entirely by begging food and money from Kamsalis in return for telling their caste legends and playing a special type of tall brass drums called *runjulu*. Such client castes, termed *aḍugukuṇivāḷḷu*, exist for other castes, too. Some examples are the Sayamodu for the Sali and the Mala Mashti for the Mala.

13. There is evidence that in the pre-British period there was a line of local Golla 'chieftains' who built forts in Visakhapatnam District in the foothills of the Eastern Ghats roughly west of Aripaka between 25 and 60 km (Thurston 1909 : 285-86).

14. Circumstances in which food is offered between castes usually centre around weddings and funerals though there are also instances of charitable 'feeding of the poor', *santarpaṇam*.

15. The Telugu form of the term jajmani is *yajamāni* or *ijamāni* which we have encountered as a term for household head and caste elders.

PART II

THE RITUAL LIFE OF THE VILLAGE

CHAPTER 3

RITUAL AND SYMBOLISM

We now turn to examine rituals and symbolism in order to understand how the idealized formal principles of social structure are instilled in the villagers and asserted in the face of the dynamic rivalries that we have outlined in Part I. It will be seen that this is done through symbolic categories and ritual activities. In the chapters that follow we discuss how this happens.

After tracing the relationship of this study to some work by other anthropologists on the significance of ritual and symbolism, we outline the basic symbolic themes and processes that underly most ritual activity in the village and serve to create basic categories of thought and behaviour (this chapter). We next proceed to examine the unique way rituals use these themes to embody the basic ideologies of hierarchy and social interdependence as well as mediate the built-in rivalrous and divisive tendencies which often threaten them. We do this by examining specific rituals in the life cycle of individuals (Chapter 4) and the calendrical rituals of the annual cycle (Chapters 5 and 6). We conclude with a look at the way ritual occasions can themselves be contexts for the expression of political and economic rivalries (Chapter 7).

IMPORTANT ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF RITUAL AND SYMBOLISM

The work of Mary Douglas and Victor Turner identifies ritual categories as creators of social ideals. As Turner has pointed out, "[ritual] actually creates or re-creates the categories through which men perceive reality" (Turner 1968 : 7). Similarly, Douglas observes that, "ritual changes perception, modifies experience by expressing experience, . . . standardises situations" (Douglas 1968 : 69). In addition, Douglas emphasises that many diverse category systems in a society are interrelated and reverberate with social symbolism, the "heavy social load carried by

apparently innocent looking taxonomic systems" (Douglas 1973 : 11). We shall see this particularly clearly in our discussion of basic symbolic themes in which we note that subordination and hierarchy are as central to the categorization and structuring of time as they are to the forms of ritual worship.

Turner's work on the Ndembu of Zambia has shown how conflicting norms can produce conflicts in a society which are mediated and resolved only through ritual. We recognise the same tendency in the society of Aripaka Revenue Village where there is the structural dilemma of controlling the competitive aspect of hierarchy. Once hierarchy and superior status are instilled as values, there is the problem of getting people or groups to accept subordinate positions to their superiors rather than ruthlessly pursue their own advantages to the detriment of society as a whole. This leads to the value of interdependence which stresses the unity and cooperation of people and groups of hierarchically ranked statuses and emphasises the benefits that derive from showing respect (paying tribute) to superiors. A related structural dilemma is the problem of maintaining the inferior, subordinate status of women, who occupy positions of great potential influence. There is also, of course, the problem of defining the notion of hierarchy itself which is becoming increasingly ambiguous in numerous economic contexts. The way in which these built-in contradictions and ambiguities are dealt with is through ritual activities in which the ideal categories are acted out and emphasised. According to Turner, "Whenever one finds the danger of manifest discrepancy between social processes, one tends to find ritualization. The paramount values of the society are symbolically asserted against the dividing tendencies inherent in its structure" (Turner 1968 : 201). Despite the existence of status rivalries, ritual symbolism and related categories of thought channel people's perceptions and cause them to feel reassured that their behaviour conforms, or ought to conform, to a hierarchical model, when in fact it is not that way at all.

Abner Cohen (1969) has considered the way in which symbols and rituals give structure and identity to groups which are associated with them. He observes how interest groups express themselves through ritual contexts. He is thus particularly concerned with the ways in which ritual and symbols are used by groups for political organization or competition. Cohen notes that, "Interest groups manipulate different types of symbolic formations and symbolic patterns of action to articulate a number of basic organizational functions, like distinctiveness and communication" (Cohen 1969 : ix). His view does not overlook the level of significance of ritual activities in which Turner and Douglas are interested. Rather, he considers two levels of significance to be operating simultaneously. Chapter 7

describes how rival interest groups within the Gavara caste expressed their competition in terms of modifications to ritual performances.

THE RITUAL IDIOM, A BASIC VOCABULARY OF THEMES AND PROCESSES

Forms of Greeting and Respect

One of the most essential concerns underlying the structure of much ritual activity in Aripaka Revenue Village is the emphasis on forms of subordination, the acknowledgement of hierarchy. These take the form of gestures of self-abasement, greeting, begging and tribute, which emphasise the superior status of their object. Such forms are the basis of all greetings between people and are regarded as proper decorum, *mariyāda*.[1] In interpersonal relations, the manipulative potential of such symbolism lies in the fact that one enhances the status of another by demonstrating deference to him.[2] Since all people are assumed to have more generous ideas of themselves than others have of them, any offer of acknowledgement by others is a valuable testimonial of their claimed status. The symbolism employed is derived from situations in which the status differences between people are basically clear and not openly challenged as for instance between Gavaras and Brahmans, though even on this level some degree of collusion can be operating. These forms are then used in situations in which statuses are ambiguous, such as status-neutral economic contexts, particularly between individuals, and become a form of manipulative bribery. In contexts of this kind, people offer valuable testimonials of status in order to get some advantage for themselves.

Let us look at some of the ways in which such status differences are expressed. First there are gestural forms such as the custom of saluting upon meeting (*daṇḍam peṭṭaḍam*, 'to salute', literally 'to put a salute'). *Daṇḍam* can mean 'homage' or 'bow' but usually refers to the raising of the hands with the palms pressed together and fingertips pointed upwards in a 'prayerful' gesture. People also salute superiors upon parting and in somewhat more formal situations request permission to take leave (*selavu tīsukonaḍam*) before quitting the presence of a superior. Another gestural form is the convention of not sitting at a higher level or in greater comfort than someone to whom one wishes or needs to express deference and emphasise hierarchical difference in status. It should be pointed out, however, that the degree and nature of compliance with this convention is variable. It is enforced by Gavaras upon Settigollu who occasionally complain that Gavaras insist that they get up off a cot and sit on the ground in their presence. It is also a form that is used by people

to show politeness as it emphasises the status of the person to whom deference is shown. It should be noted that it is not a strictly applied principle in everyday life. Castes generally tend to be informal with each other when status is not being emphasised for some instrumental or manipulative purpose, at least among Shudras and Harijans.

On numerous occasions during fieldwork, men scolded their children for sitting down on a cot with me in a natural fashion. Their fathers wished to honour me by emphasising my status difference and used the opportunity of scolding their children to do so. One Settigollu man reprimanded his son saying, "*nīku cinna-pedda tēḍa tēlīdu*," "you do not know the difference between (people of) greater and lesser (status)." On another occasion a Gavara scolded some small boys, "*atan antastu mī antastu yēmiṭirā*?," "what is his status and what is yours?"[3] While such gestures are optional, they are greatly valued and carefully evaluated. For instance, after a group of relatives returns from a meeting with strangers in another village to discuss a prospective marriage arrangement, they report back on how well they were received. If they were treated with respect as honoured guests they comment that they were shown good *mariyāda*, *mancı mariyāda*, and are highly pleased. We have already mentioned how the Harijan school master fell foul of the Gavara elders of the village when he failed to observe these conventions.

Language is another mode through which status differences between the speaker and person addressed are expressed. In contrast to the Krishna and Godavari delta regions, the villagers of Aripaka Revenue Village do not generally use the second person plural in contexts where a single person was being spoken to (see Table 26). However, they do use these terms in circumstances in which status differences are great or in which they wish to emphasise those differences for manipulative purposes. Other ways in which social hierarchy is expressed in language

TABLE 26 : HIERARCHICAL CATEGORIES IN TELUGU PERSONAL PRONOUNS

tamaru	you	—	exalted, used in addressing a high official
muru	you	—	used to address a higher status person, or just for politeness; it also serves as the second person plural
nuvvu	you	—	used to address a lower status person; it is also used informally among all villagers
ayana, ame	he, she	—	high status
atanu	he	—	polite
vāḍu, adi	he, she	—	low status or familiar (*adi*, 'she', also means 'it')

include the addition of the suffix—*gāru* to the name of a person addressed, and the suffixes—*aṇḍi* (to a higher status person),—*rā* (to a lower status person or familiars) to verbs.

Flattery by exaggeration is also employed in terms used for address. For instance, when begging a Kamsali to complete a job, a Gavara farmer will resort to the respectful title *brahmamgāru*.[4] In a similar way, many address farmers as *naiḍu* (meaning 'lord' or 'ruler'). The term *bābu* is another term used by people to address superiors respectfully.

Puja: A Ritual of Hierarchy and Interdependence

There is an unmistakable similarity in structure between the forms of interpersonal greeting or respect behaviour and the fundamental form of religious worship, *pūja*, defined variously as worship, respect, obeisance, homage, or veneration (Brown 1966 : 669). Both of them exhibit concern with the expression of respectful subordination, the essential ingredient in the creation and symbolization of hierarchy. It is, in fact, an underlying message of *pūja* that the showing of respect, with its attendant self-abasement and emphasis on hierarchy, is a primary source of ritual efficacy and well-being since it establishes reciprocal obligations with forces in the world which can affect human beings.

It is important to note, however, that while *pūja* might share the structure of respect behaviour in social contexts, it can also reverse the direction of causation. In *pūja*, acts of deference are viewed as means, efficacious in themselves, of creating reciprocal obligations with their objects (whether these be deities or things) in contrast to the deference behaviour between unequal persons which is usually caused by the more overtly coercive power of a superior over an inferior. This is not to deny, however, that at times the obligation of worshippers to worship their deities takes on coercive overtones in which frequent repetition of ritual performances is considered imperative. But this only serves to reinforce what is the central message of *pūja*, that human well-being depends on the offering of tribute and the subordination of the self.

The basic components of a *pūja* sequence are as follows:

(i) *Purification.* The worshipper purifies himself (through bathing or fasting) and the site of the worship. (These are in themselves gestures of respect.)

(ii) *Salutation.* A *namaskāram* hand gesture or other bodily expression of self-abasement is offered while facing the object of worship. The term *namaskāram* is derived from Sanskrit words associated with bowing and making oneself low (Brown 1966 : 509). *Daṇḍam*,

a synonymous term, similarly refers to a bow, prostration, respects and homage (*ibid.* : 408).

(iii) *Offering*. Gifts (*naivēdyam*) are offered. Depending on the object of worship, the content of the offerings ranges widely from flowers, incense, oil lamps, a waved camphor flame (*hārati*), fruits and items of clothing, to animal sacrifice.

(iv) *Receiving*. A portion of the items offered or some other consecrated substance previously offered (such as *tīrtham*, the liquid used to bathe the deity), is received back by the worshipper. Such items are referred to as *prasādam*. This stage in the *pūja* sequence partakes of the symbolism of accepting food from a person of higher status and can thus be interpreted as another testimonial of respect. At the same time, *prasādam* can be considered a reciprocal benefit resulting from *pūja* since it is believed to contain and transmit auspicious influence from the deity or object of worship.

Implied in the above sequence of *pūja* offerings is a strong sense of reciprocity, albeit an asymmetrical one. The worshipper demonstrates his respect for the object of worship and then expects various forms of well-being in return. This is the symbolic lesson that hierarchically different persons and castes are interdependent. *Pūja* is not solely instrumental, however. It is frequently considered to be meritorious in itself. The association of *pūja* with *puṇyam*, 'religious merit', and *dharmam*, charitable righteous behaviour between people, elevates it to a plane of the highest abstract morality.

Other anthropologists have discussed aspects of *pūja*, and it can be shown how this interpretation compares with theirs. Like Sharma (1970), we search for continuities in ritual practice and feel that the villagers of Aripaka are not concerned to rank their deities in an explicit hierarchy. Yet it is clear that rituals operate in an idiom of hierarchy. Sharma singles out the purity-pollution principle as the 'underlying consistency of idiom' in Hindu religious activity (Sharma 1970 : 17), tracing the constant concern for purity of the worshipper, the deity, and the offering (*ibid.* : 16). However, even her own material appears to contradict her emphasis on purity as the main theme of ritual. She herself admits that villagers conceive of deities as powerful rather than as pure (*ibid.* : 19) and that maintaining purity is the idiom of respect for dealing with such powerful deities. In her conclusion she is forced to point out that "the *hierarchical* aspect of the purity-pollution principle is emphasised again and again" (*ibid.* : 20; italics mine).

In work on popular religious practice in the Chhatisgarh region of

Madhya Pradesh, Babb identifies *pūja* as the 'core ritual' (Babb 1975 : 33). He designates three essential features of *pūja* as: purity, *pranam* ('salute') and *prasād*. These basically coincide with the scheme presented here though it fuses the presentation of offerings with their being received back in the form of *prasādam*. Since *prasādam* refers specifically to items of food, it is preferable to consider it as a separate component. Babb's scheme reflects his contention that the offering of food is the 'central indispensible core act' of *pūja* (*ibid.* : 54). As do we, he interprets the eating of *prasādam* as an expression of humility in the idiom of accepting food leavings of a person of superior status. However, it is more useful to note that the common element underlying all the acts in a *pūja* is the expression of self-subordination, rather than focus on food acceptance, no matter how compelling a symbol it might be when considered in isolation.

Range of Objects of Worship

The range of objects of worship (*pūja*) is extensive and not solely confined to images of deities and the like. Abstract forms and substances are sometimes used to represent deities. For example, a wad of turmeric and vermillion on a betel leaf is used to represent Ganapati in Brahmanical rituals. More striking is the veneration of a wide variety of everyday utensils, vehicles, substances, and animals. The feature all these things have in common is their involvement in the well-being of the worshipper. Tools, carts, well-pumps, fields, rice, gold, and money are all attributed with the ability to produce wealth and prosperity for their users. If they are not adequately honoured by *pūja*, the central message of which is respect and self-subordination, they can and will cause harm. Carts can be involved in accidents by a wheel coming loose, fields can become infertile, sources of livelihood can be hit by unforseen misfortunes. A villager's whole existence is bound up in an interdependence with these things and with everyday domestic objects in a manner analogous to the interdependence within or between castes in the village.

It is important to note the manipulative side of such worship. Just as in the use of respect behaviour, there are two types of objects. The first is a clear-cut deity of superior power and status. The second is of ambiguous status, who has certain powers to influence the worshipper's well-being but whose status is somewhat dubious. Worship of the second type is performed in the idiom of the first type as a sort of manipulative bribe. Though a man can make or destroy a cart, and thus in a sense has power over it, the cart has a potential power of its own to cause a fatal accident to its owner. The point is not which has more absolute power, the man or the cart. They are both dependent upon each other.

A farmer who worships his cart, offering it a fictively superior place through respectful obeisance to it, assures his well-being, his safety from accidents. Villagers annually worship cobras in a festival called *nāgula caviti*[5] out of the same logic.

Thus, the message of the ritual structure is that the entire universe is tied into a moral system in which well-being is assured when forms of hierarchy are utilized to express respect. One can thus discern an ideology of hierarchy in the worship of various objects without having to expect that the objects are ranked among themselves or with relation to people in a hierarchy replicating human society. A corollary of this is that any lack of well-being tends to be attributed to the failure to fulfil adequately the obligations of hierarchical interdependence. Since misfortunes are to some extent unavoidable, villagers feel compelled to do *pūja* repeatedly and to multiple objects as an insurance for the future.

Wadley has remarked that Hindu worship is directed towards dieties and objects as loci of power (Wadley 1975 : 55). She also recognizes that ultimately these powers are defined in terms of their ability to affect people (*ibid.* : 56). However, she seems to be content with artificially classifying deities and objects of worship in terms of their varying powers, benevolent or malevolent. While such an endeavour is fascinating, it diverts attention from the ideological message of ritual behaviour as a whole, which creates and endorses a hierarchical model of ideal social relations in the process of activating or influencing various kinds of powers. Why else would forms of disrespect or pride evoke anger on the part of the gods? (*ibid.* : 85). Moreover, the people themselves are not concerned with ranking deities.

Wadley (1975 : 56) uses the categories of 'marked' and 'unmarked' deities for categorising the range of objects worshipped. For her, unmarked deities are only treated as deities in specific ritual contexts, e.g. the worship of wheat sprouts at Raksha Bandan, a ceremony for tying on protective amulets (*ibid.* : 56). However, the overlap of marked and unmarked contexts is so great that it is questionable whether these terms are helpful as analytical tools. As she herself points out, all food can be considered as *prasādam* (*ibid.* : 35) since the first food of the day is offered to the household fire. In a similar way, I was warned by villagers to avoid stepping on unhusked rice spread out on a floor in the secular context of drying it in the sun. Stepping on it would show it (and the goddess of household prosperity and wealth, Lakshmi) disrespect. No question of ritual pollution was involved here.

In fact, deities and everyday objects overlap and are in many cases coextensive. When being instructed how to do a chicken sacrifice to my motor scooter on one festival (because it had been breaking down

frequently and inexplicably), I was told to say a prayer in my mind to the goddess Durga for no accidents to occur in the coming year, despite the fact that the *pūja* and sacrifice were intended specifically for the scooter (rather than for Durga in general). Settigollu did a *daṇḍam* to the first palm tree they climbed in the day to ensure they would not fall or have other accidents. However, when questioned they said that they were doing the *daṇḍam* to Lord Rama. Similarly, when people held gold to their eyes in a respectful gesture or when shopkeepers kissed their first earnings of the day, this veneration (with its respect through self-subordination) was both to gold and money as objects, as well as symbolically to the goddess Lakshmi. Housewives occasionally mentioned that their domestic grindstones were the goddess Gauri, since they ground their turmeric on it,[6] and it is sat upon by an auspicious woman, *pērāṇṭālu*, in the marriage rituals. Gauri is also the goddess honoured by the annual Gairamma Festival, a celebration which makes extensive use of wedding symbolism.

Well-being and the Worship of Deities

Relations with deities are phrased in the symbolic idiom of ideal relations between people, the showing of respect through expression of subordination and dependence. These relations are not merely mirror reflections of actual human relations. Rather, they are expressions of ideal categories which are created by, and exist in,[7] the rituals. Villagers behave towards deities in ways which are traditionally handed down and conceive of these methods as axiomatic, proper by definition.

There is the belief that deities which are properly worshipped bring benefits, maintain or restore bodily health, bestow or enhance fertility, and promote economic prosperity. The symbolism of subordination (as expressed in *pūja*) is linked to the techniques of ensuring those states of well-being, in either their regular maintenance or emergency restoration. By extension, when illness or misfortune occurs it is generally attributed to failures to live up to obligations of subordination and reciprocity. For this reason, persons who fall ill make promises to deities that if they are cured they will perform various rituals in the deity's honour. Such vow-making activity (*mokku*, 'vow') occurs with high frequency throughout the year. In one year some forty instances of vow performances came to light. Fourteen were instances of individuals being recently healed and sixteen were annual performances by families who had received some special healing benefit in the past. The contents of vow-fulfilments are testimonials of subordination and dependence which are far more demonstrative than a usual *pūja* and can include self-mortification or considerable monetary sacrifice. Vow-making is a fundamental element in according to a deity a reputation for power and effectiveness.

Attributing misfortune to neglect of deities is a mechanism whereby peoples' belief is strengthened rather than diminished in the face of the inevitable illnesses and mishaps which occur in the course of normal life. Each time a particular illness or misfortune occurs, there is an activation of worship with its symbolic message that well-being derives from showing the proper symbolic subordination and respect. These symbolic forms create an ideal model of behaviour which is extended to the relations between people, though in actual fact relations between people do not conform to neat categories of hierarchy.

The difference between ties of individuals with deities and ties of groups with deities lies more in the regularity and permanence of the relationship. This reflects the social patterns in which relations between groups (such as castes) are relatively fixed, on a long-term basis, while relations between individuals (such as friendships or inter-caste commercial relationships) for temporary instrumental goals are more fluid. Long-term annually renewed relations characterize the ties of groups or settlements with deities just as they form the basis for the least ambiguous economic ties between service castes and employers such as jajmani ties with Washermen. By contrast, individual vow-making tends to be initiated for a particular purpose like the curing of an illness. There are obligations to fulfil the vow made on that particular occasion, but the worshipper is not afterwards compelled to maintain a regular long-term tie.

Performance of deity rituals is not only the fulfilment of obligations between people and deities using the medium of *pūja*. It is additionally the occasion for the fulfilment and expression of obligations between people themselves. We shall see later in the descriptions of deity festivals that caste interdependence is essential to many ritual occasions and ceremonies, *kāryālū*.[8] Participation in rituals serves to delineate groups of people who act together for their mutual benefit and well-being. Stereotype duties of various castes in rituals are stylizations and idealisations of social interrelations, particularly of the jajmani tie of long-term economic subservience and service of one caste to another. Barbers, Washermen, and Harijans, in particular, play essential roles in the life cycle rituals of Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis and all Shudra castes.

Enactments of long-term ties with deities, either by groups or by individuals, have implications for the villagers' perception of long-term economic ties such as those with Carpenters, Barbers and Washermen. The ritual forms of long-term ties and these long-term economic relations between castes are both expressions of an ideal of interdependent cooperation between castes and people which is not clearly observable in reality.

Bloch has suggested that there is a discontinuity between religious statements and reality, and that the modes of communication in ritual

conceal and preserve particular power structures (Bloch 1974 : 77). In our case we see that *pūja* derives much of its logical power from real and imagined threats to the actual power structure. Many castes engage in a degree of competition over status. Overtly some stubbornly refuse to subordinate themselves to others who do not reciprocate, while covertly many castes harbour notions of their status as superior to that publicly conceded to them. From this situation, *pūja* utilizes the notion that inferiors have a potential power to deny the legitimacy of their superiors by refusing to act subordinately. Signs of deference are conceived of as possessing a manipulative power. Superiors supposedly need shows of deference to maintain their position, and it is assumed that this places them in the debt of their inferiors.

By contrast, in the real world such strategies are not always successful and can be disruptive. Kamsalis, despite their refusals of other castes' food, are not accepted as higher than Brahmans. Economic and political power is the final arbiter of such contested claims, at least in their public manifestations. Perhaps it is best to interpret *pūja* as ultimately an ideology which supports an idealized *status quo* by advocating the benefits of submission to superiors. In compensation for accepting the existing power structure, it offers inferiors the hope of reciprocity, the notion that hierarchy implies interdependence, that rulers are accountable to the ruled, and that deities are responsive to worshippers.

In the following examples we examine the interpretation of illnesses or misfortunes as a punishment for laxity in expressing proper respect and subordination to deities. It is notable that the coercive imperative to show respect to deities makes no great distinction between the so-called Sanskritic deities found in temples with Brahman priests, e.g. Rama or Satyanarayana (a form of Vishnu), and non-Sanskritic deities whose officiants are non-Brahmans, the village goddesses, though it is true that on the whole, male, Sanskritic deities are more benevolent and village goddesses are more potentially vindictive in overall character. This is an issue which we take up later.

Rationalization of the failure of a ritual to Rama to bring rain

In 1972 when Gavara villagers became anxious about the late arrival of the monsoon they staged a twenty-four-hour *bhajana* (hymn-singing) and hired a Brahman priest to chant 150,000 *mantrams*, prayer formulas, at the village Rama temple in Yatapalem. They then held a *santarpanam*, charitable feeding of the poor, in which dependent castes were fed by Gavaras. Some clouds appeared on the horizon and people commented upon it as 'god's good-will' (*dēvuḍu daya*). However, it did not rain and the weather only continued to get hotter. As early as the

day after the rituals a rumour spread that a young woman who was menstruating had attended the *bhajana*. Rama was displeased with the disrespect shown to him and therefore did not send the rains. Later, as anxiety of an impending drought grew, a woman became possessed by Rama and revealed that two menstruating women had attended the *bhajana* and hence there had been no merit, *puṇyam*. Through the possessed woman, Rama instructed the villagers to break fifty coconuts at the village temple to atone for this.

To summarise, in order for the farmers to secure their own prosperity—dependent upon the rains—they tried to earn merit with God through acknowledging their social responsibilities to the poor. But two women threatened social well-being with their disrespect and spoiled the merit the men had gained. A further act of obeisance to Rama was sufficient to cancel the harm done by the women.

Myths of the consequences of neglecting to fulfil one's vows to a deity. A popular vow-fulfilment ceremony in the village is the performance of the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam*.[9] People make a vow to perform this ceremony upon the successful occurrence or completion of a desired event, usually associated with family well-being, such as the performance of a wedding or the birth of a son.[10] An integral part of the proceedings of every *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* is the reading of the Satyanarayana story in Telugu (other sections of the Brahmanical chanting are in Sanskrit unintelligible to the villagers). This story[11] consists of numerous tales and episodes about persons who promised to perform the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam*. It tells of the benefits from doing the *vratam* and the consequences of neglecting to do it once it has been promised. The following is a summary of one of the main tales.

A merchant (Komati) came upon a king's wife performing a *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam*. He inquired about the purpose of the ritual and was told that it was to enable the king to have children. The merchant's wife had been childless so far, so the merchant made a vow to do a *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* if his wife should have a child. She then gave birth to a daughter. She reminded her husband of his vow but he postponed it saying that he would fulfil it once his daughter got married.

The daughter grew up and the merchant had her wedding performed but forgot about his vow. With that, Satyanarayana got angry and caused the merchant and his son-in-law to be imprisoned by a king whose soldiers had caught them with stolen money which had been 'planted' on them by thieves. Difficulties also befell the merchant's wife and daughter. Their money was stolen, they were afflicted with diseases, and they were finally reduced to begging from house to house.

At one house, in the course of her begging, the daughter was given some Satyanarayana *prasādam*. This gave her and her mother the idea to perform a *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam*. With that, Satyanarayana became very pleased. He appeared in a dream to the king who had imprisoned the merchant and his son-in-law. He revealed that they were innocent and advised they be freed. The king had the men released and their property and boat restored to them.

Satyanarayana appeared to them disguised as a holy man, *sanyāsi*. He asked about the contents of the ship. The merchant, being excessively proud of his wealth (*dhanagarvam*, 'wealth-pride') mocked the *sanyāsi* and suspected that he might want to steal something. Accordingly he told him that there were only leaves in the ship's hold. Soon afterwards the merchant and his son-in-law discovered that indeed their cargo was only a pile of leaves.

They realised that they had offended the *sanyāsi* and ran to him making *daṇḍam* gestures and praying to be forgiven. The *sanyāsi* then reminded the merchant that he had never fulfilled his promise to perform a *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam*. He explained that all his difficulties had been the consequence of that negligence. The merchant praised him pleading for mercy (*karuṇa*) and protection (*rakṣimpumu*). The *sanyāsi* restored the ship's contents and the merchant left with his son-in-law on their way to their home port.

The merchant's wife and daughter received news of their arrival as they were in the midst of performing a *Satyānārayaṇa Vratam*. In their haste they neglected to partake of the *prasādam* at the end of the ceremony. As a result, Satyanarayana was again angered and caused the ship to sink. The wife was distraught and contemplated suicide. She thought that her husband and son-in-law had been drowned.

The merchant prayed to Satyanarayana who, by means of a voice from the sky, said that his wife had forgotten to take *prasādam*. The wife also heard this and went home at once to eat some *prasādam*. When she returned she found her husband and son-in-law safely on shore. From then on, the merchant performed a *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* every month on the full moon day.

The following lessons are taught in this myth: Promises (vows) to a deity must be fulfilled. The principle of reciprocity is strictly enforced. People must acknowledge that their well-being is dependent on others (in this case, a deity). They err if they think they can live self-sufficiently (such a feeling of superiority is described as pride). Holy men can be deities in disguise. Deities respond to pleas for mercy and protection. In addition, receiving *prasādam* is crucial to the completion of a *pūja* sequence.

Another popular *vratam* performed by individuals in the village was the *Trīnādha Vratam* in honour of the Hindu trinity, Vishnu, Siva, and Brahma. In the story which is read as part of that *vratam* there are similar examples of people doing the *vratam* and getting beneficial results, while people sceptical of the *vratam* experience grave consequences. For example, in two episodes a king and a teacher show scorn and disrespect to the *Trīnādha Vratam pūja*. In both cases their sons die but are subsequently brought back to life when the king and the teacher each see the error of their ways and perform the *vratam* themselves.

Illnesses of People and Animals Seen as the Result of Failures to Propitiate Village Goddesses Properly

The following are examples of the tendency to regard illness as caused by failure to propitiate village goddesses. Proper propitiation of goddesses involves symbolic enactment of the ideology of hierarchy, while violations of proper hierarchical relations are attributed with bringing misfortune.

(i) A sheep which was being raised by a Gavara farmer for sacrifice at his annual vow-fulfilment to Durgalamma-Bangaramma suddenly fell ill. The farmer decided to do the ceremony in the following week and appealed to the goddesses to keep the sheep healthy since, after all, it was to be sacrificed in their honour. Later, various villagers commented that the goddesses had got angry with the farmer for delaying to do the festival and disrespectfully selling a sheep originally intended to be sacrificed to them, of which the ill one was a replacement. The sheep got well and the ceremony was performed.

(ii) When an epidemic of animal diseases started, plans were made to do a festival with a pig-impalement sacrifice in honour of a goddess in charge of animal illnesses, Paśuvula Māremma. The festival had not been done for many years. A Carpenter commented that the reason for the Gavaras' neglecting this goddess' festival was pride, *garvam*. He added that now that the cattle were getting sick the villagers realised they should not have ignored the festival. One farmer, supporting this view, commented that the goddess caused the cattle to get sick because she was angry that her festival had not been done and hence she had not been fed.

(iii) A sister of one of the village Barbers had been visiting from another village when a festival to Bandamma, a village goddess, was initiated. She left several days before the conclusion of the festival and experienced unusual pains and swelling in her neck. She made a vow to Bandamma and returned to the village for the festival,

The pain and swelling went away. Villagers commented that the reason why the woman's neck got swollen was that she had not taken leave of the goddess when she left the village with no intention of returning for the festival. It is a convention that one is obligated to participate in a festival if one is in the village when it is initiated.

(iv) A ballad about a *bālapēranṭālu* is in a similar vein. A local bus refused to take aboard the body of a dead child. The bus driver and conductor were soon afflicted with vomiting and diarrhoea. When they realised it was due to their affront to a *bālaperanṭālu* they prayed to her, acknowledging her powers and praising her. They immediately returned to take her body, which was being transported to her parents' village, and they were instantly cured.

In all the above four cases, illness was interpreted as a warning by a deity affronted by neglect or improper respect. Once the deity was taken seriously, cures were expected to follow.

The Symbolism of Female Deities

In an article about fear and the status of women among Brahmans in Karnataka, Harper observes that there is a "relationship between the low status of women and their portrayal in the cultural belief system as dangerous persons" (Harper 1969 : 81). He suggests that this arises from men's fear of women and that this fear derives from guilt over constantly manoeuvering women into a subordinate, disadvantaged status. Harper assumes, however, that there exists a notion that women are being denied an imagined right to be equal or powerful. I suggest that rather than arising from guilt, men's fear arises from women's perceived threat to male dominance. Evidence of such potential threats are abundant in our data on women in the Gavara caste. And Harper provides evidence for this in his own material: "Nearly every conceivable structural mechanism is brought into play to prevent women from uniting in opposition to the males in the house and threaten to some slight degree male dominance" (Harper 1969 : 90).

Harper's material also resembles ours on the issue of widowhood. Widows seem to pose a particular threat to male dominance since they have established a real base of power and influence over their grown children and, moreover, are no longer under the control of their husband. "A woman's progress towards a position of prestige and some control over the affairs of her household are interrupted when her husband dies. If she has daughters-in-law, the senior one supplants her as "house mistress". She is then under the authority and protection of her sons, and

her position of power and dominance among the female members of the family is diminished. Upon the death of her husband...she loses her hard-earned position within her own family" (Harper 1969 : 91). The consequence of this threat of a widow's position among Havik Brahmans in Karnataka is that widows are believed to be particularly dangerous and go around poisoning people. All the more reason, of course, to monitor and control their activities. Harper informs us that beliefs about poisonings are confined to the Brahman caste because of the more restricted life Brahmans impose on their women in contrast to Harijans. The same patterns of belief, about the dangerousness and impulsive passion of women, are evident among Gavaras. Such beliefs correlate with the subordinate status of women at all levels of society. In their own way, Gavara women threaten the dominance of their men.

Notions about the dangerous qualities of undominated women appear in conceptions of the character of deities. Babb observes in material from Eastern Madhya Pradesh: "In general, masculine divinity seems to act as a restraining factor, while feminine divinity is a potentially destructive force which must be restrained" (Babb 1970 : 146). He adds, in the case of deities conceived of as a married pair, that "The goddess must be viewed as the subordinate member of the pair, her more terrible aspects apparently subdued by marriage" (*ibid.* : 147). Harper (1969) similarly tells of a dangerous lesser female diety, *cauḍi*, in Karnataka. Stories about *cauḍis* tell of their being subdued by Brahman men who compel them to obey with *mantras*. The *cauḍis* then toil on their masters' behalf submissively and benevolently. Eventually, through trickery or a mistake on the part of the Brahman, they become free from the spell. As soon as they are no longer subdued they go out of control and become malevolently destructive to their former masters and their families.

These observations have particular relevance for us in considering the significance of Andhra village goddesses. In the Revenue Village of Aripaka there are two major annual festivals which centre on female deities, the village goddess festival and the Gairamma festival. Significantly, the village goddess, a *dēvata*, is without a major male consort and is potentially highly destructive. This feature parallels the material of Babb and Harper which shows that undominated female deities are more dangerous and potentially malevolent. The threat of her potentially destructive powers mobilises the entire village to worship her in greater numbers than for any other ritual activity. In contrast, Gairamma is a *dēvi*, a form of Gauri, who invariably appears with her husband Siva in the idol which is worshipped during her festival. There are numerous references to the symbolism of marriage in the Gairamma rituals which are associated with the benevolence of the goddess and fecundity of the ripening crops. The

performance of the Gairamma festival is not imperative in the way that a village goddess festival is. The festival has even been omitted in some years.

Concepts of the character of these two female deities draw heavily on stereotyped notions of women in the society at large, firstly, woman as virtuous wife with her husband still alive — the benevolent Gauri with her consort Siva — and secondly, woman as threatening, dangerous, and undominated (as in widowhood) — the potentially malevolent village goddess who needs repetitive pacification and worship. The common feminine quality which both of these female deities share is involvement in worldly matters and desires, namely fecundity, prosperity, and health. This derives from the notion that women in society are more endowed with qualities of *āśa* than men.

It is remarkable that both these two varieties of female deity, *dēvi* and *dēvata*, are referred to in the similar idiom of motherhood, despite their differences in temperament. Gauri is generally referred to as Gairamma, and the individual goddesses all have names similarly compounded with the suffix-*amma*, such as Bandamma, Maridamma. In the case of Gairamma, the reference to motherhood, with all of the positive, benevolent, protective qualities it implies, is quite justified. Gairamma is the goddess associated with the ripening crops. However, when a village goddess is explicitly referred to as a mother, her motherly qualities are not so readily apparent. Rather, in her case, these qualities are wishfully hoped for. In addition, this use of the term 'mother' to call or address a village goddess is a kind of euphemism and form of manipulative overpayment of tribute, analogous to the manipulative use of respect behaviour between individuals. Similar payment of tribute to bribe forces of potential harm was also observed in the worship of objects linked to a caste's livelihood. We thus see that to understand the character of female deities in the context of an Andhra village we need to distinguish: (i) the roles of women in society as a whole; (ii) the concept of *āśa*; (iii) the varying characters of different types of female deities (for which female roles are used as metaphors of wild or tamed powers); and (iv) the manipulative applications of the terminology of motherhood to widely differing varieties of goddess.

Presence and Sight : Darśanam, Evil Eye, and Architecture

Sight is an important element in *pūja* and is linked to categories of thought with wider applications than *pūja* alone. Sight is a means of transferring power or influence from one thing to another. If the thing viewed is benevolent, then the effects are beneficial. The concept of visiting and viewing a deity (or powerful person, especially a potentially

beneficial politician or religious preceptor) is known as 'doing darśan', *darśanam cēyuṭa*. Sight is also a way in which negative influences are transmitted, particularly those of divisive competition between men. If someone who feels jealousy looks at one or one's possessions, he transmits *diṣṭi*, negative influence, or 'evil eye.'[12] *Diṣṭi* causes those things which receive envious glances to spoil. To avert this effect, there is an elaborate technology of diverting visual attention to '*diṣṭi* absorbers', such as scarecrow-like overturned pots in the fields, chillies and limes attached to a motor vehicle or bicycle, black cords tied to the wrist or ankle, or figurines (*diṣṭi bomma*) at house entrances. There are also numerous methods of removing *diṣṭi* and throwing it away by transferring it from the person affected into various movable substances which are disposed of.

The objects of evil eye are typically things exhibiting wealth, success, or beauty. It is not surprising that young children are a focus of evil eye concerns since they represent the potential prosperity and competitive advantage of one family over another. One particularly anti-social method by which families exorcise their children's illnesses is indicative of the underlying competitive attitude focussed on children's well-being. Exorcistic substances are placed on well-travelled public lanes at night. These substances, usually a row of three white dots, are believed to transfer evil eye and illness to the families of unwary passers-by.

Notions about the influence of evil eye also determine principles of village architecture. To avoid trapping 'lines of sight' within houses there is never an opening in a building which is not opposed by a corresponding aperture on the opposite parallel wall, referred to as its 'answer', *javābu*. Similarly, doorway frames must be aligned exactly within the house or between houses if they face one another so as not to trap lines of sight. In addition, no house entrance should perpendicularly face a street or path down which people walk and might cast glances. In order to avoid the bad luck that is believed to result from seeing a 'bad face' at the beginning of a day or start of a month, some people do a *pūja* or *sūryanamaskāram*, a *daṇḍam* gesture and prayer to the god *Sūrya* in the form of the rising Sun, the first thing in the morning.

Influences are also transmitted by touch and proximity. Numerous rituals contain gestures of placing auspicious objects in contact with others, with the aim of transferring auspicious influence.

Time, Beginnings, and Auspiciousness

There are a number of important features in the division of time that deserve consideration because they show how systems of cultural categories carry strong underlying social implications. The timing of many activities is tied in with the ideology of subordination and hierarchy (as

expressed in the underlying structure of *pūja*) through the concern to ensure well-being by initiating activities at auspicious moments.

One of the most remarkable features of village life is an intense concern with beginnings and initiations of particular activities. There is the assumption that to start at the right time will positively influence the outcome of an entire undertaking. While these factors principally concern calculations for celebrating stages in the individual's life cycle, they also extend to the initiation of agricultural operations, starting out on journeys, commencing construction, inaugurating buildings, the first use of household or work implements, and the wearing of new clothing.

The crucial factor affecting beginnings in this way is the calculation of auspicious and inauspicious divisions of time. These are based on the principle that different times are 'ruled' by different astrological forces. These forces are the Sun, Moon, seven planets[13] and twenty-seven constellations (*nakṣatram*). The solar year is divided into auspicious and less auspicious halves (*uttarāyaṇa* and *dakṣināyana*) based on the Sun's apparent northward or southward point of daily rising on the horizon. The Sun traverses twelve zodiacal constellations (*rāsi*) in a year and also the twenty-seven constellations (*nakṣatram*) from which they are derived. The presence of the Sun in one of the twenty-seven constellations is known as a *kārte* (each one of which is called by the name of its constellation). *Kārte* last for thirteen and a half days each and are known in order by name by most villagers since they are the reckoning points for agricultural operations. These conjunctions of the Sun with various constellations are attributed with auspicious or inauspicious influences.

The Moon also features prominently in the reckoning of time. Lunar months, beginning on the new moon (*amavasya*) are divided into auspicious (waxing, *suddha*) and less auspicious (waning, *bahula*) fortnights. Each of these lunar fortnights consists of fifteen days, the last day of which is either the full or new moon (see Table 27). Each day in the cycle of fifteen lunar days (*tithi*)[14] is attributed with auspicious, neutral or inauspicious influence over the undertakings of people. The eleventh lunar day (*ēkādaśi*, pronounced by villagers as *ēkāsi*) particularly of the waxing moon, is the most auspicious day of a month and is always the occasion for a disproportionate number of ritual ceremonies and activities. Other especially 'good' days are the fifth, seventh, and tenth lunar days. The fourth lunar day (*caviti*) is considered to be the most inauspicious.[15] This tends to be a self-fulfilling prophecy and people seem noticeably pessimistic, sullen, and contentious on *caviti*. Many is the time when a journey is postponed or an undertaking put off when it is realised that the day is *caviti*. Even a severely ill person would not be taken to hospital on *caviti* for fear that disaster would surely ensue.

TABLE 27 : THE FORM OF A TELUGU DATE USED IN DESIGNATING FESTIVALS ETC.

[For example, *caitra śuddha ēkādaśi* means the eleventh phase of the waxing moon in the month of *caitra*. This information is given in the following sequence: 1. lunar month, 2. waxing or waning fortnight (*śuddha* or *bahula*, respectively), 3. lunar day, *tithi* (here are two fourteen day-cycles, the first in the waxing fortnight ends with the full moon—*pūrṇimi*, the second ends with the new moon—*amāvasya*). The other lunar days, which do not necessarily correspond to solar days, are designated by names which are derived from Sanskrit ordinal numbers.]

DIVISIONS OF ONE LUNAR MONTH

Month (*1*)	*Wax/Wane* (*2*)	*Phase* (*day*) (*3*)	*Numerical equivalent of lunar phase*	
caitra	suddha	pāḍyami	1	
caitra	suddha	vidiya	2	
caitra	suddha	tadiya	3	
caitra	suddha	caviti	4	
caitra	suddha	pancami	5	
caitra	suddha	ṣaṣṭi	6	
caitra	suddha	saptami	7	waxing fortnight
caitra	suddha	aṣṭami	8	
caitra	suddha	navami	9	
caitra	suddha	dasami	10	
caitra	suddha	ēkādaśi	11	
caitra	suddha	dvādaśi	12	
caitra	suddha	trayōdaśi	13	
caitra	suddha	caturdaśi	14	
caitra		pūrṇimi	Full Moon	
caitra	bahula	pāḍyami	1	
caitra	bahula	vidiya	2	
...	...	...		waning fortnight
caitra	bahula	trayodaśi	13	
caitra	bahula	caturdaśi	14	
caitra		amāvasya	New Moon	
vaiśākha	suddha	pāḍyami	1	(New month)
vaiśākha	suddha	vidiya	2	
...	...	...		

Days of the week are ruled by astrological bodies, usually those planets from which they derive their names. Certain days are also associated with Śīva (Monday, *sōmavaram*) and *Viṣṇu* (Saturday, *śanivaram*). Saturday is specifically linked to Śrī Venkatēśvara, a form of Vishnu and widely considered to be the most important Hindu deity of Andhra Pradesh. In addition to the effects of the movements of the Sun and Moon, the planets and constellations exert influences over each hour in every day. Practically every day has its *varjam*, inauspicious times of up to two hours, though the average Harijan villager does not concern himself with these.

The source of information on the astrological influences for any particular day is the *pancangam*, annual astrological almanac.[16] In the village, the main authority on the almanac is the Aripaka village Record-Keeper. He is the most frequently consulted source for determining auspicious times (*muhurtam*) in the village. There are others who also know about the almanac, literate Gavara men often active in leadership roles. All these men have handbooks, easily available in town bazaars, which state instructions for each type of activity. These purport to be the assessments by scholars based on the combinations and permutations of astrological forces acting on each other. Like individuals, each type of activity has its own set of auspicious and inauspicious influences. What might be unlucky for one activity might be a lucky time for another. Individuals have differing luck deriving from the astrological bodies ruling at the time of their birth. More highly sophisticated astrological techniques strive to correlate the forces governing particular activities (e.g. beginning a journey) with the forces ruling particular individuals. However, such degrees of accuracy are not generally sought by the villagers.

The above descriptions concern the selection of auspicious times to ensure that activities have positive outcomes through being ruled by favourable astrological forces. There are, however, certain events, particularly in the individual's life cycle, which occur unpredictably: birth, first menstruation, and death. In these, there is the danger that an important beginning of a new state can take place at an inauspicious time. If left unremedied, this is believed to cause misfortune (*naṣṭam*) to various relatives. In the case of childbirth, the well-being of the husband may be threatened; in the case of first menstruation, the husband or his father might be negatively affected. Deaths at inauspicious times can also have bad consequences for the deceased person's house or neighbourhood.

Techniques to placate these malevolent influences are known as *śānti* ('peace'). They involve a combination of placatory prayers and offerings with the fulfilment of the 'curse' through legal fiction. Sight plays a prominent role in these rituals. For instance, there is the case of a child

which is born at an inauspicious time. Its father is not permitted to see it since he would then be afflicted with malevolent influences. At an auspicious time (*muhurtam*) a ceremony is arranged at which a Brahman priest officiates. A cloth is held between the husband and wife who holds their new born baby. In the ceremony, the planets are appeased by Sanskrit chants (*mantram*) and offerings. Then the bottom of the cloth is lifted so that the husband can view his child's reflection in the oil of a large shallow oil lamp. By this device he views his child for the first time without directly looking at it. He thus averts the malevolent influences which are thought to transfer at the first sight. This ceremony provides an example of the concept of the crucial importance of direct lines of sight in transferring influences, and of the importance of timing for beginnings.

Other instances of legal fictions reveal the principal mechanism involved, the expression of respect and subordination to a benevolent ruling force. It is necessary to begin an activity such as ploughing a field at an auspicious time regardless of the actual intention of carrying on with the activity at that time. Farmers go through the ritual of ceremonially starting and then leave the work to be done later. This demonstrates that the actual time of proceeding with the undertaking is irrelevant as long as a proper gesture of respect has been shown to a benevolent force ruling at the moment of beginning. That gesture assures the jurisdiction of the benevolent force throughout the remainder of the task. We discern in this concern with auspicious times a link to an ideology about social relations that we saw in *pūja*, namely that well-being is achievable only through the paying of tribute, the symbolic acknowledgement of subordination.

NOTES

1. Defined in English as 'respect, civility, and decency' (Brown 1966 : 782).
2. Compare E. Goody's discussion of greeting as gift, as establishing a debt, and as a mode of begging (Goody 1972 : 61-62).
3. *Antastu*, the word used to describe status is the same word used to describe floors in multiple-storey buildings.
4. *Brahmam* is an allusion to the Kamsali caste hero Vīrabrahmam, as well as to their claim to Brahmanhood.
5. The festival of *nāgula caviti* is discussed in Chapter 6.
6. Turmeric is regarded as an auspicious substance with many ritual associations with the status of women.
7. See C. Geertz's notion of systems of symbols as model *of* and model *for* reality (Geertz 1966 : 7).
8. Sing. *kāryam*, the villagers' term for a ritual or ceremonial event, carrying the

connotation of action and doing: 'act, use, effect, anything which is done or ought to be done, business, success in business' (Galletti 1935 : 66). *Subhakāryam* is the term for auspicious rituals.

9. *Satya*, 'true'; *nārāyaṇa*, another name for Vishnu; *vratam* 'vow' (in Sanskrit).

10. By contrast, vows to localised village goddesses tend to centre on the curing of illnesses.

11. See bibliography entry under Anonymous (1971).

12. The word *diṣṭi* derives from the Sanskrit *dṛṣṭi* meaning 'sight'.

13. The Sun, Moon, and seven planets—Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu—constitute the nine planets or *navagrahālu* in whose honour numerous prayers and hymns have been composed.

14. *Tithi*, lunar days, incidentally, do not coincide with solar days and tend to overlap at times.

15. The fourth and eleventh lunar days are opposite counterparts in that the size and shape of the moon on the eleventh day of the waxing cycle is the same as that on the fourth day of the waning cycle—only its direction is reversed.

16. *Pancangam* means 'five aspects', namely *tithi*, lunar day; *varam*, weekday; *nakṣatram*, constellation; *yogam*, luni-solar divisions of the day; and *karanam*, sub-divisions of the lunar day.

CHAPTER 4

LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

We now turn to discuss specific ritual activities in village life and concentrate on two main types of ritual, those of an individual's life cycle and those of the village in the cycle of a year. We find that life cycle rituals are particularly important for understanding the demarcation and creation of statuses and roles within the caste, especially categories of age, sex, marital status, and clan affiliation. Annual cycle rituals are more prominent in the definition of inter-caste relations. However, these distinctions are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, these different sorts of rituals overlap and interpenetrate, sharing a single idiom of symbols which reinforce the basic ideologies of hierarchy and interdependence. Both the life cycle and the annual cycle rituals define categories of status and models for roles. Both repeatedly reiterate group interdependence through common participation in ceremonies and the symbolism of *pūja*.

Since our main aim is to elucidate the significance of rituals in terms of the data on social structure presented in Chapter 2, we confine ourselves here to outlining the rituals of the Gavaras. Life cycle rituals differ, to varying degrees, between each of the eighteen castes of the village and often castes are unaware of or unfamiliar with each other's life cycle customs.

Life Cycle Rituals as Beginnings

Gavara life cycle rituals are in many ways better conceived of as beginnings than as transitions or passages from one status to another. This is evidenced in the great concern people show with the timing of rituals. Life cycle rituals which can be planned in advance are invariably arranged to coincide with astrologically auspicious times (*muhūrtam*). A lesson of subordination to astrological forces is thus expressed in every life cycle ritual. People embarking on new statuses should begin at the right time

so as to be under the jurisdiction of benevolent forces ruling at the moment of initiation. Conversely, as we have already noted, if birth, first menstruation or death occur at astrologically inauspicious moments, special placation rituals called *śānti* have to be undertaken.

Turmeric Symbolism

There is another element which life cycle rituals share in common, the prominent use of turmeric (*pasupu*) and vermillion (*kumkuma*) that can be made by mixing turmeric with lime. This bright yellow substance, and the bright red vermillion *kumkum* derived from it and used in close association with it, is one of the most important ritual symbols. It is eminently a symbol in the sense described by Turner as 'multivocal', 'susceptible of many meanings' (Turner 1968 : 17), having a multiplicity of referents. It also has the quality of simplicity, another important feature of ritual symbols:

> "The greater the symbol, the simpler its form. For a simple form is capable of supplying associative links of a very generalized character; it displays a feature or features which it shares, literally or analogically, with a wide variety of phenomena and ideas". (Turner 1968 : 185.)

The use of yellow and red powders or pastes made of turmeric roots is one of the most common forms of performing *pūja* to an object, a person, or a deity. Making a turmeric smear or spot and adding a red dot in the centre (together referred to as a *boṭṭu* or *tilakam*) or making a turmeric smear superimposed with parallel red lines are ritual acts encountered in an immense variety of circumstances. Turmeric is used in most *pūjas*, festivals, and agricultural rituals; it represents family ancestors and deities in the household shrine; it auspiciously decorates the doorframe at the entrance to a house (*gaḍapa*, 'threshold', is a term also used to refer to 'household'); turmeric and vermillion are used to adorn ritual offerings, such as vegetables or animals for sacrifice; turmeric and vermillion represent the god Ganesh (*Gaṇapati*) at the outset of Brahmanical rituals; turmeric is smeared on new books, new clothing, and announcements of auspicious ceremonies (*subhakaryālu* = *subha* + *kāryam*) such as weddings; turmeric is a prominent substance in the marriage rituals during which it is smeared on rice, auspicious threads, and the bodies of the bride and groom 'for purification'; turmeric is also one of the central symbols of auspicious womanhood—a turmeric-smeared forehead with a large red kumkum *boṭṭu* dot in the middle is prohibited to widows. These examples are given to alert the reader to the highly associative role turmeric plays in the descriptions of rituals which foilow.

Role of Women

An especially important feature of Gavara life cycle rituals is the way they define the role of women, in particular, the ideology of the auspicious woman and the ideology of *āśa*. As remarked earlier these concepts are central to the justification of the subordination of wives to husbands. Ritual symbols constantly emphasise the negativity of widowhood through their praise of auspicious womanhood. Birth, marriage and first haircutting ceremonies all focus on the birth and well-being of children, the principal concern of wives with their husbands alive. First menstruation is also relevant to female fecundity. Weddings are particularly rich in references to auspicious wifehood. Funerals, in their own way, make important distinctions between behaviour towards auspicious women and widows. Women themselves internalise the notion of the negative and inauspicious connotations of widowhood through their participation in these rituals. In this way, the negative symbols of widowhood motivate women to try to remain in an auspicious state by being loyally submissive and devoted to their husbands. Thus, the symbols of widowhood exert a pressure on behalf of marital stability and female subordination to husbands in this society in which counter tendencies are constantly present.

Household Shrine: 'God Corner' (*dēvuḍu mūla*)

A final feature in the cycle of rituals is the prominent role played by the household shrine. This is known among Gavaras as *dēvuḍu mūla*, 'god corner' and, as among the Harijan and other castes of the village, is always found in the northeast corner (*īśānya mūla*, 'the northeast'), i.e., on the north corner of the east wall in houses with a rectangular plan. Among the Gavaras it usually consists of a small elevated area, often with three small step-like ledges. There are minor variations in its appearance among the Harijan and other castes. Some are without a raised platform of any kind.

The essential feature common to all, and the feature that makes it a god corner, is a rectangular panel (*macca*, 'patch, spot') smeared with bright yellow turmeric over which red vermillion lines (*gītalu*, 'lines') have been drawn. As can be seen in Chart 5, the patterns of parallel horizontal lines vary idiosyncratically by household. They generally tend to be made in groups of three or five lines, sometimes interspersed with parallel rows of vermillion dots (*boṭṭu*, plural *boṭlu*). For Gavaras the god corner household shrine is a place of worship (*pūja*) and abode of deities (*dēvuḍu*, plural *dēvuḷlu*), village goddesses (*grāma-dēvata*, plural *grāma dēvatalu*), family ancestors (*peddalu*, 'elders', i.e., patrilateral ancestors of the male household head), and family *pēranṭālu* (auspicious women who died before their husbands, such as a wife of any male

member of the household).[1] Unmarried female children who died, known as *bālaperanṭālu* (*bāla*, 'young'), are also at the god corner but are sometimes commemorated additionally in a special monument at the site of their burial. (That monument generally has a bush of sweet basil—*tulasi*—planted in it, which further associates *bāla-pēranṭālu* with *pēranṭālu*, in

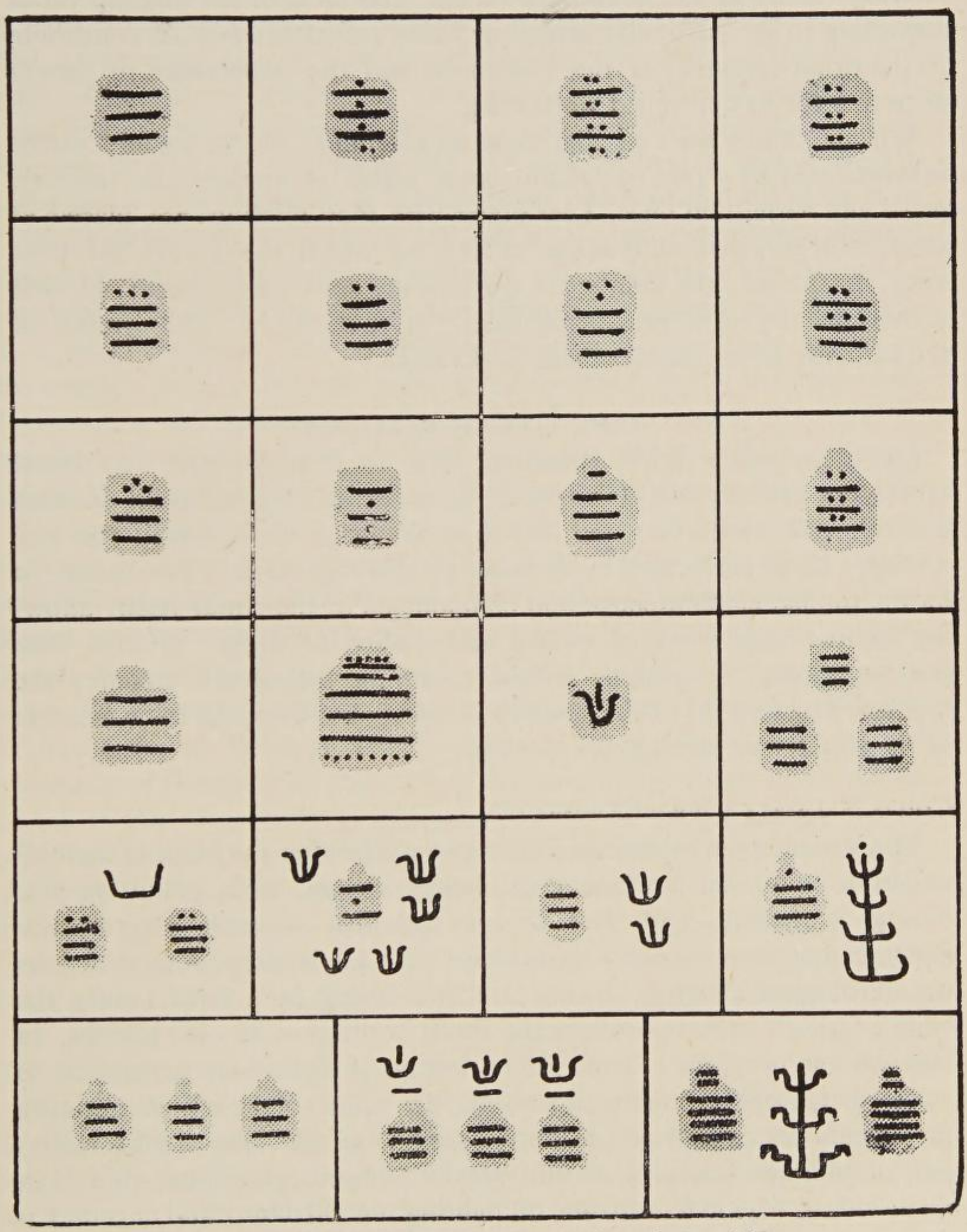


Chart-5 'Variations in Gavara *dēvuḍu mūla* Panels'.

that *tulasi* is a symbol of an auspicious wife.)[2] Unmarried male children who die are called *vīruḍu*, 'hero', but are not distinguished or honoured in any particular manner.

All life cycle rituals, annual cycle rituals, personal 'emergency vows', and private merit-making devotions (especially by the household head's wife) are marked and commemorated by *pūja* and eating a meal from offerings made at the household shrine. The form of the worship varies according to the particular ceremony being celebrated but all contribute to the ritual centrality of the household and the importance of family ancestors for its continued well-being.

When a family goes on pilgrimage to a temple, the household shrine is substituted by a tree or column upon which is applied the turmeric panel and vermillion lines. Leaf plates with food offerings are placed at the foot of this makeshift shrine in front of which the family eat their meal. In this way the family can worship the deity as a household unit without having to be present physically at their house. The symbol of the turmeric panel enables them to do this.

LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

Life cycle rituals will be described here to illustrate the way ritual symbolism actually works in context to define and create social statuses and roles. It should be noted that there are many variations in the way a ritual can be performed by different people even of the same caste, in locale, timing, elaborateness, and components of the ritual itself, allowing for the expression of rivalry and claims to higher prestige. The free variations of symbols within a certain framework enhance the multiple associations of the symbols involved; however, the basic message of the ritual structure always remains.

CHILD NAMING : *uyyālu* ('SWING')

This ceremony is performed within two weeks after the birth of a child[3] and after its mother has bathed to remove *puruḍu*, birth pollution. The timing is flexible, and may be on the fifth, seventh, eleventh, or fifteenth day after the birth. Nowadays the time is often determined by the astrological almanac. If they are still living in a joint family the child's father's parents conduct the ritual in place of its own parents. In this way the principle of superior authority of the older generation is asserted. (In one ceremony observed, the child's father was not even present and its mother played only a peripheral role. The child's maternal grandfather was present and played a more prominent role than its mother.) A *pūja* (consisting of lighting an oil lamp and incense) is done at the house shrine ('god corner') by the paternal grandmother

who then places a waist cord (*multāḍu*) on the child. This cord is periodically replaced throughout an individual's life but not removed until an individual's funeral when it is ceremonially snapped. The baby's name is said into each of its ears by its grandfather and then grandmother. Then it is swung in a hammock-like cloth cradle (*uyyālu*) suspended from a roof beam.

As it swings, its grandmother and other women sing parts of a wedding song to it. The song alludes to Siva's wife, Gauri, and Rama's wife, Sita, whose weddings were performed amidst splendour and good fortune (*vaibhavam, ṣaubhāgyam*). The song has a double reference. It looks forward to the child's growing up and getting married, while at the same time it refers to the child's own mother having had a fruitful marriage by giving birth to it. Childless married women often place their wedding lockets (*mangalasūtram, settimānam*, or *tāli*, symbolising married status) on the child with the hope that it will influence their ability to have children. Following this, food offerings (*prasādam*), are distributed to those attending. For auspiciousness, gold is sometimes placed on the *multāḍu* waist cord at the time of the ceremony but is then removed. A piece of a root (*vāsukomma*) which is believed to enable the child to learn how to speak is, however, left tied to the waist cord, a common site for the wearing of protective amulets[4] throughout an individual's life.

In some regions of India a child is named after the astrological force or deity ascendant at the moment of its birth. Not so here where names are chosen on the whim of the child's parents or grandparents. Their choices are often influenced by current fads in the family or village. Certain families have special relationships with particular deities (e.g. Surya, Venkatesvara, Mahalakshmi) which they perpetuate through their children's names. These trends change over time and reflect the current popularity of deities. For instance, while many older people have names related to Puri Jagannath, younger people have a higher proportion of names related to Tirupati Venkatesvara. This is in line with the shifting of popularity from Puri to Tirupati as pilgrimage centres.[5] Other names are intended to appear meaningless or worthless (e.g. *peṇṭayya* from *peṇṭa*, 'dung'). The reason for this is to deflect 'evil eye' or jealousy which might otherwise be attracted to a child with an attractive name.

First Haircutting : *puṭṭu tala* ('Birth Head')

This ceremony occurs when the child is between two and three years old. Its timing is planned to coincide with an astrologically auspicious moment. The first haircutting ceremony is linked to the naming ceremony in that it is typically performed at a temple of a deity in whose honour the child was named. If this is not possible, the child's hair is

collected for placing at a later date in a tank associated with a temple to a particular deity. It thus has the effect of expressing tribute to a deity who it is hoped will protect his or her namesake. The relatives prominent in the ceremony are again the parents of the child's father (particularly the child's paternal grandmother), if they are alive.

Turmeric appears in the ritual both in the form of a root, placed on top of a plate of raw rice later given to the family barber, and in the form of 'yellow rice', *acintalu* (or *akṣintalu*). Yellow rice is raw, hulled rice that has been stained yellow by being mixed with turmeric paste. Relatives who come to the haircutting ceremony take a small coin and some yellow rice and move it about the child's head several times in a clockwise motion. They drop some of the yellow rice on the child's head and put the coin in the barber's shaving cup which is filled with water. One barber plays a drum throughout the proceedings while the family's permanent barber does the actual cutting. On one occasion observed, a female child was held by her father's mother and her hair was caught in a sari end by her father's younger sister, the category of relative known as *atta*, a classificatory term that means both father's younger sister and mother-in-law since the child can marry her father's sister's son. The child's own mother played a peripheral role, watching from afar. Once the child's hair is cut, the drumming stops and *prasādam* is distributed to all who have attended.

This ritual is a means by which the elder generation express their authority over their children and grandchildren. It also postulates that the family barber is essential to the family in ways far more extensive than the mere provision of economic services. In addition, the ritual is an act of *pūja*—to a god in the child's name—and as such reiterates the value of symbolic tribute for the well-being of a family and their offspring.

First Menstruation : *puṣpavati*[6] *āyuṭa, pedda maniṣi āyuṭa* ('Becoming a Big Person')

The ritual surrounding a girl's first menstruation serves to mark and delineate the distinction between women of married and unmarried statuses. In the ritual, turmeric features prominently as a symbolic element. Aspects of astrological timing are also given great importance. Auspicious wives (*pēraṇṭālu*) and the family barber also play important symbolic roles.

When a girl first menstruates, a person who is an authority on the astrological almanac is consulted. If the constellation (*nakṣatram*) is 'not good', ceremonies are undertaken to avert misfortune (*naṣṭam*, in which death is not precluded) occurring to the girl's husband. If first menstruation occurs during the lunar month of *magha* (roughly from mid-January

to mid-February), the misfortune threatens her husband's father.

Generally the girl 'sits' at her husband's family's house, customarily referred to as 'in mother-in-law's house' (*attavārinṭlō*), the first month and at her own family's (*kannavārinṭlō*) the second month. This order might be reversed depending on the house in which the girl is at the onset of menses. The girl is smeared with turmeric and has a turmeric and vermillion dot put on her forehead. She is seated on a palm leaf mat which is brought by an auspicious wife. Piles of uncooked rice are placed at the four corners of the mat and a string that has been smeared with turmeric is extended between them. The family barber is sent to announce the event to relatives in other villages. The written announcement he takes with him is smeared on its corners and sides with turmeric. The barber receives generous tips from the people to whom he brings the good news. Depending on the house in which the girl is sitting, relatives of the other family send her offerings of new saris (a premenstrual girl wears a skirt rather than a sari), fruits, oil for her hair, and cooked confections. If the girl is not married, however, no offerings are sent and the event is not ceremonialised, though announcements are made to the girl's relatives and she will begin wearing a sari.

Menstrual pollution (*maila*) is terminated by a bath after approximately five days. During menstruation a Gavara woman does not enter the inner room of her house (the location of the family god corner and storage of seed grains). She also does not perform *pūja* or cook for her family. The notion of prohibitions on dealings with deities during menstruation is explained as preserving respectfulness rather than as preventing mystical contamination or ritual pollution. The reader will recall the *ēkaham* that was unsuccessful because two menstruating women attended.

MARRIAGE : *peḷḷi, penḍli*

A wedding is in many respects the most important life cycle ritual in an individual's life as it marks the transition from the status of immature juvenile to the fully adult status of one who is married. Marriage ceremonies are highly complex, involve a great deal of expenditure, and entail the invitation of large numbers of guests. Certain major symbolic themes emerge from the complexity of the wedding rituals. We shall discuss these after describing the main activities.

Gavara marriages take place in a series of stages : searches for a prospective spouse, a betrothal ceremony, the invitation of guests and raising of a ceremonial pole, the three days of the actual wedding, a series of trips back and forth between the groom's and bride's families, a consummation ceremony, a period of avoidance, and finally, normal married life.

Parents begin looking for spouses for their children when a son gets to be about 15 or 16 years old or when a daughter gets to be 11 to 13. It is considered the responsibility of the boy's family to search for a suitable bride. This takes place in the months preceding the marriage season which culminates in May when a dozen or more Gavara weddings take place in the village within a few weeks of each other.

When a boy's family looks beyond their marriageable relatives and outside their own village, formal search parties are formed to visit a prospective bride's family and view an eligible girl. In the first of three steps in arranging a match, the boy's elders, both male and female, don their finest clothes and go to the village and house of the proposed bride on an auspicious day.[7] After they are politely greeted by the family and introduced by a go-between, they are shown the girl who displays great shyness, *siggu*. The search party is often asked to stay for a meal. There is a proverb the villagers say, *gatikitē atakadu*, 'if you lap it up (a low word used for dogs) then it will not be agreed (suitable, joined)'. Sometimes this proverb is ignored, especially if the boy's family is impressed with the girl and her family.

In the second step, the girl's family goes to look at the boy's house, also on an astrologically auspicious day. If the families are still interested they negotiate the dowry and wedding exchanges and agree to meet for a betrothal ceremony, *pasupu rāyaḍam*, 'applying of turmeric.' In the dowry negotiations the girl's mother's brother often plays an important role in addition to the girl's father because he is a favoured relative for a girl to marry. There is considerable haggling in which the boy's family demands a larger cash dowry from the girl's family than is ultimately agreed.[8]

On an astrologically determined day, the boy's family goes to apply turmeric on the girl to seal the engagement. The girl's prospective mother-in-law (termed *atta* by the girl) and the groom's eldest sister (termed *vadina* by the girl) apply turmeric on the girl's forehead and then on her arms and legs. They also present her with a new sari and blouse. The girl puts on the new clothes, and food that has been offered at the family god corner is passed out as *prasādam* to relatives and friends attending. Turmeric and vermillion are distributed to auspicious women. The intended fathers-in-law engage in ritually expected joking with each other.

Several days before the brahmanical wedding ceremony a ceremonial pole, known as the *rāṭa*, is raised in front of the groom's house on a day determined to be auspicious. A minimum of five participants is required for performing this ceremony. While the family barber drums, several male relatives and friends dig a hole in the ground where the wedding will take place, usually in front of the groom's house. Auspicious wives who are also relatives and friends, smear turmeric paste on an area of the

rāṭa, a tall post made of *neriḍi* wood.[9] They smear five horizontal lines across this turmeric patch. Then with the help of the men they raise the post in the hole into which numerous items have been placed. These items vary but usually include turmeric-stained husked rice grains (*acintalu*), a copper coin, and new unhusked rice grains—items termed 'the nine types of grains', *nava danyālu*. In addition, some families put in five different kinds of food grains, milk, pieces of coral and pearl, or three coins, of which one is of copper.

Two small branches of other trees,[10] *barnika* and *pāla*, are secured to the post along with a string to which a turmeric root and betel leaf (*tāmbulam*) have been attached. This is one of a series of such strings with a turmeric root or leaf which is tied during the marriage rituals. A small square mud platform[11] is made around the base of the post. It is decorated with red earth and white spots of the kind used in house decoration. A *pūja* is performed at it with a banana and several incense sticks. The raising of the *rāṭa* constitutes the official beginning of the construction of the covered wedding shed or *pandal* (*pandiri*), that is made with nine additional poles and palm leaf thatched roof.

Next comes the core of the marriage rituals, the three days of wedding ceremonies focusing on the Brahmanical rites and the tying of the marriage locket, the *mangalasūtram* or *tāḷi*. It follows a nonspecific number of days after the pole-raising, and is timed to coincide with astrological determinations of the most auspicious moment. It is this three-day series of activities, particularly those on the first day, for which guests—relatives, friends, business associates and others—are invited. They are customarily notified with colourful printed invitations, which depict the marriages of deities such as Rama and Sita, Siva and Parvati, or Venkatesvara and Padmavati, and are auspiciously smeared with turmeric on their four corners.

The highlights of the first day are: the *kāla-gōla sambaram* ('nailcutting celebration') in which the groom and bride are bathed; a feast is served to guests; and a Brahman priest performs a series of rites referred to as the *lagnam* ('auspicious period') which usually take place in the middle of the night. These Brahmanical rites, forming the heart of the proceedings, feature the tying of the bride's wedding locket by the groom at the groom's family god corner. The second day consists of a palanquin ride for the bride and groom around the village followed by their eating a meal at the husband's god corner. On the third day, the main activities are the removal of the wrist cords and forehead pads, the bathing of the bride and groom, a meal at the groom's god corner, and the departure of the newlyweds for the bride's house.

We now look more closely at these three main days and preparations

preceding them. A delegation of three auspicious women from the groom's family goes to fetch the bride from her home, an act called *peṇḍli pilupu*, 'wedding call or invitation'. Among the participating auspicious women might be the groom's elder sister, *akka*; his younger sister, *cellelu*; or father's sister/maternal uncle's wife, *atta*—all of these being either actual or classificatory relatives. They bring such gifts as turmeric paste for applying to the forehead of the bride, a stalk of bananas, and a mould of jaggery. They are given a meal at the house of the bride and stay there overnight. The next morning the women bring the bride to the village for the first day of the wedding.

On that first day, Gavara men dig large troughs in the ground which they use to build fires for pots of food for the wedding feast. Gavara men prepare pots of rice while Gavara women prepare curries and fried dishes. Kamsali men come to help open raw jackfruit for use by the cooks, and invited guests begin arriving.

Meanwhile preparations are made in the area where the evening rituals will take place under the wedding shed. A Gavara man cuts a square yantra-like pattern on the ground outlining it in the earth by means of a groove some 3 cm wide by 3 cm deep. The diagram, a square with rectangular protruberances on each of its four sides, is called a *pīnu* or *peṇḍli pinu* and it is here that the bride and groom sit during most of the ceremony to come. An auspicious wife freshly cowdungs the diagram, uses red earth to outline the groove around it, and draws auspicious *muggu* diagrams and lines of white powder, gaily decorating it.

In an area not far from the wedding shed, which by now has been constructed, the groom and bride come to sit on wooden platforms, *pīṭa*, approximately 3 cm high. These are placed under a ceremonial arch, *toraṇam*, formed of mango leaves strung between two slender sticks. This is the site of the' nailcutting celebration' attended by only a fairly small number of onlookers—women, children and only a few male relatives of the groom. A wooden measuring container filled with husked uncooked rice topped with a turmeric root is brought along with a brass tray with yellow rice, *acintalu*—uncooked rice stained with turmeric; a large wad of turmeric paste; vermillion powder; and some mango and *neriḍi* leaves.

The nailcutting portion of the ceremony begins with an auspicious wife smearing the groom and then bride (seated to his right[12]), with turmeric paste. Onlookers are given yellow rice to throw on the groom and bride. They also wave five-paise coins around the heads of the groom and bride and put them into the barber's water cup as in the first haircutting ceremony described earlier. The auspicious woman then smears her own face with turmeric.

Members of the Barber caste from Yatapalem begin drumming as the groom's family barber scrapes each nail on the groom's toes and fingers. A close male relative of the groom, such as his elder brother, then puts a wad of paper money into the sari end of the groom's kinsman called *atta*, a classificatory mother-in-law (or mother of a marriageable relative) such as the groom's father's sister. The barber then snips the hair at the sides of the groom's head, in a perfunctory manner since he does not actually need a haircut. The drumming then stops. At this point the groom is jokingly smeared with some pot soot by his sister or other close relative to make him imperfect and less vulnerable to evil eye. The barber then smears the groom with *nalugu*, a paste used in bathing that contains turmeric, sesame oil, and crushed black gram (*minapa pindi* or Phaseolus mungo). The auspicious woman helps to smear turmeric on the bride and then is smeared with turmeric herself by a relative of the bride such as an elder sister. At this point, the barber is given a payment of the rice from the wooden measuring container which he wraps in a white cloth.

Next, three auspicious women sing the so-called *suvvi* song as they pound rice. The women use rice pounding poles (*rōkali*) to which *kankaṇam* strings have been tied. A single woman leads in singing the song, the words of which call for other women to come help her husk the grain. Others repeat the verse as all keep the beat by lightly pounding the rice in the large wooden mortar (*rōlu*). The groom's elder sister or other close female relative who is an auspicious woman brings a piece of jaggery and some milk which are put into the mortar and ground by one of the officiating auspicious women using two pounding poles. She lifts the poles and, crossing them, touches the belly of the groom. Each of the other two auspicious women do the same.

Then comes the bathing of the groom and bride. To the drumming of several barbers and a Jangam *pūjāri*, the three auspicious women go in procession to a well. Two of the women carry black ceramic pots steadied on their heads by a single white cloth which is wound into pads underneath each pot. The third woman carries a brass pot. Each of the pots has a turmeric root tied to it with a string around its neck. Two Gavara men hold a canopy of cloth over the heads of the women and the pots on the journey to and from the well. They bring water back and set the pots down behind the groom and bride and the leaf festoon, *toraṇam*. Respectfully, the pots are placed on an area that has been freshly washed with cowdung water, had a fresh *muggu* diagram drawn on it (such as two sets of three double parallel lines), and had three small piles of unhusked rice placed down as a 'seat' for each pot. The auspicious woman who has been sitting with the groom and bride ties a string in a figure-eight fashion around the necks of the three pots to connect them

to each other. She also puts turmeric powder into each pot and mixes the water of the three pots together with a small pot used as a dipper. Then, the auspicious woman pours water from the dipper over the groom as the barber washes the boy's hair and another auspicious woman assists in washing his body. An auspicious woman who is a close relative of the bride, such as her elder sister, helps to bathe her. The groom and bride change into clean dry clothes and the drumming stops.

A *pūja* is then performed to the *rāṭa* pole. A meal on a leaf plate is set down in front of the pole in the manner of meal offerings at family god corners. (It is the custom that only vegetarian food is served during all wedding proceedings.)[13] One of the auspicious women freshly cleans the area around the *rāṭa* with cowdung water and draws an auspicious *muggu* diagram with white powder. She gives the groom a forehead dot (*boṭṭu*) of vermillion powder and at the *rāṭa* waves a metal spatula that has embers on which she sprinkles *sambrāni* incense powder. The auspicious woman then leads the groom and bride in three clockwise circumambulations of the *rāṭa* pole. She is in front pouring water from a dipper pot with three mango leaves in it, holding the little finger of the groom's left hand as he leads his bride by the little finger of her left hand. The groom and bride then enter the groom's house for a meal at the god corner. This is the first meal of the day for them as they have been fasting up to now as is also the custom before performing *pūja* to a deity. On one occasion, Barber children were observed being urged to eat the meal offering left at the *rāṭa* pole as it is considered auspicious.

There follows a mass feast given by the groom's family to fellow sub-clan members and other relatives, other Gavaras, and members of other castes. Seating arrangements are by social categories with sub-clan members and other Gavaras being fed inside the houses of the groom and other of his close relatives. Settigollu and Barbers were observed to sit in the same line of diners on the ground in front of a house with Gavara guests. When a Settigollu was asked about eating with Barbers he commented, 'we're equal.' Castes which maintained separate rows while dining were Salis, Malas, and Madigas. Members of these castes who demonstrated their inferiority to Gavaras by accepting those meals also carried off and disposed of their own used leaf plates. An additional expression of the equality of those who dine in the same row is the etiquette that none rise after their meal until the last person in the line has finished. Some castes that do not accept food prepared by Gavaras such as Kamsalis and Jangams are sent raw food items. But members of castes such as Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis that consider themselves superior to Gavaras and are not economically dependent on them, generally stay aloof from Gavara weddings.

In the evening, four or more male relatives of the groom gather to make the *arasālu kaṭṭu*,[14] a ceremonial rice bundle upon which the bride will sit as her *mangalasūtram* is tied. The men wind rice straw into rope-like bands that are used with other rice straw to bind five *kuncam* measures of unhusked rice and five pieces of turmeric root into a bundle resembling an ottoman cushion. The man in charge then playfully haggles with a relative of the groom for a fee, *kaṭṇam*, for constructing the rice bundle. He demands five rupees but is only offered ten paise.

The wedding rites, popularly referred to as the *lagnam*, 'auspicious time', and which are presided over by a Brahman priest, typically take place in the middle of the night, often between 2 and 4 a.m. Gavaras of the village use the services of a Brahman, one Svayampākala Varahanarasimhamūrti of Subbavaram, a member of the caste known as *Telagāṇyulu Brahmaṇulu*. He performs the rituals chanting Sanskrit prayers in eleven segments.

The first segment is the *Gaṇapati pūja*, the auspicious beginning of all Brahmanical rituals, performed in this case using a wad of turmeric paste with a vermillion dot on it to represent Lord Ganapati (Ganesh, son of Siva). He is invoked to prevent the arising of obstacles to successful completion of the proceedings. This takes place after the bride and groom have been seated on a white cloth laid over the *peṇḍli pīnu*, around which has been placed four poles used to yoke teams of bullocks. Between them is an auspicious wife seated on an overturned grinding stone of the type used to make turmeric paste and other spices for meals. This stone is said to be Lakshmi, consort of Vishnu and goddess of wealth and household good fortune. The bride and groom are seated on *pīṭa* seating platforms which, like the grindstone, are covered by the cloth. During the *Gaṇapati pūja* the Brahman has the bride and groom throw yellow rice on Ganapati.

The second and third segments of the Brahmanical rites are the *kankanāla pūja* and the *bāsikāla pūja*. Following a *pūja* to two measures containing raw hulled rice (*biyyam*) used later in the rites, the Brahman priest ties a thread with a rolled-up leaf attached to it called a *kankanam*, on the right wrist of the groom. He then ties a string with a cloth pad attached to it around the groom's head. This is called a *bāsikam*. The pad, held in place in the middle of the groom's forehead, is rectangular. It is stained with turmeric and has a vermillion horizontal line on it. The Brahman then ties a *kankanam* on the left wrist of the bride and a *bāsikam* on her forehead. After more chanting and the smearing of part of the wedding locket with turmeric, the Brahman priest ties a *kankanam* on the left wrist of the auspicious woman seated between the bride and groom.

The fourth segment consists of the groom and bride each placing a betel leaf with a bit of jaggery on top of each other's heads, and then the tying of the *mangalasūtram*,[15] the wedding locket, during the astrologically determined auspicious moment, *lagnam*, which typically falls around 3 or 4 a.m. The Brahman conducts *pūja* to the two parts that make up the wedding locket. Made of gold, each part is shaped like a slightly convex disk with a small bump or knob in the middle, somewhat reminiscent of a breast. During the *pūja*, in which they are smeared with turmeric, the two parts are separate, one on the rice measure of the groom and the other on the rice measure in front of the bride. The Brahman mixes yellow rice from the groom's and the bride's tray and throws it on them. He then twists the two *mangalasūtram* pieces together. After directing that a quantity of yellow rice be prepared and distributed to all the guests, the Brahman hands the assembled locket to the aspiucious wife. As the Brahman chants mantras, this woman hands it to the groom's *atta* who holds it up to the necks of various female relatives of the groom who are auspicious wives. Then it is passed to relatives of the bride who are auspicious wives and handed back to the Brahman.

As the *lagnam* (or *muhūrtam*) approaches, the Brahman leads the groom, the auspicious woman, and the bride into the room in the groom's parents' house with its god corner. The drumming and music rise to a crescendo outside the house as the bride sits on the *arisālu kaṭṭu*, rice bundle, facing the god corner. The groom stands facing the bride with his back to the god corner and ties the wedding locket around the neck of the bride. No matter what might happen to disrupt the proceedings further, the couple are henceforth considered to be married. The Brahman throws yellow rice on them and then the groom's *atta* leads the couple back out of the house to the guests who also throw large quantities of yellow rice.

The fifth segment, *brahmamūla*, focuses on the tying together of the groom and bride with cloths. First comes an exchange of two pairs of tinsel garlands decorated with pictures of deities such as Venkatesvara and his consort Padmavati. The bride's sister puts a copper coloured garland on the bride and the bride puts one on the groom. Then, the Brahman gives the groom a silver-coloured garland to put on the bride. Following this, the Brahman gives the bride a silver-coloured garland to put on the groom. Next, the Brahman puts a length of cloth around the neck of the groom and a different piece of cloth around the neck of the bride. After smearing the four corners of each cloth with turmeric, the Brahman ties Rs. 1.25 in a *tāmbulam* leaf with yellow rice into a knot on the groom's cloth and then does the same to the bride's. The Brahman ties the two cloths together. At this point, the rice in the measuring vessels placed in front of the groom and bride is poured into a cloth bag as an offering to

the Brahman.

There follows the sixth segment, called *talambrālu*, which involves the ceremonial pouring of rice by the groom and bride over each other's heads. The Brahman conducts a *pūja* to the rice to be used and then chants as he has the groom and bride scoop up rice with both hands as he pours water and then milk on it, at one point having the milk pour through the rice of one to fall on the rice of the other. Then each dumps a pile of rice over the other's head.

In the subsequent eighth segment, *saptapadālu*, a ceremonial treading of the groom's and bride's feet is performed. The bride also receives toe rings, a mark of married women. The Brahman has the groom and bride stand. On an overturned traditional brass eating bowl the bride is directed to place her left foot and the groom treads on it, touching her toes with the toes of his right foot. After repeating this, the bride uses her left foot to tread on the groom's right. Then the auspicious woman places a set of two silver toe rings on the second toe of the bride's left and right feet.

The viewing of the star, Arundhati—called by villagers *arunjōti*—forms the ninth segment, called *nakṣatra darśanam*, 'viewing of the star'. The Brahman takes the bride and groom out from the pandal to point to this star in the Pleiades named after the wife of the sage Vasishta, renowned for her steadfast loyalty to her husband. Even if the star is not actually visible, the Brahman points to it, chants mantras, throws yellow rice up to it, and has the bride and groom salute it.

When the bride and groom return still draped with the cloths that are tied together, their seating positions are reversed. The bride is now to the groom's right. The auspicious woman remains in between them, however. At this point begins the ninth segment, known as *kaṭnamulu*,[16] the exchange of dowry, gifts, and donations. Just before this segment and during it, the groom's family distributes favour to the guests, such as bags with sweets and a banana and small pieces of fragrant white camphor on tasseled, tinsel-decorated sticks. The Brahman is handed a gold chain that is the groom's family's gift to the bride. He says a mantra over it and has the auspicious woman place it on the bride.

Then the bride's family hands over a cash dowry to the Brahman for the groom. Often in weddings between non-relatives a controversy arises over the amount offered by the bride's family. They first offer less than what had originally been agreed, such as Rs. 300 instead of Rs. 500. Only after sharp words on both sides does the additional Rs. 200 get handed over. The Brahman puts the money into a brass tray in front of the bride, taps the tray three times and proclaims 'Rs. 500 katnam from the groom's father.' The Brahman then accepts and proclaims donations by relatives and family friends one at a time, first for the bride and then for the groom.

Careful lists are made of all donations.[17] The convention is that the parents of the bride and groom return the gifts, with a small additional amount, when the donors perform their childrens' weddings.

The tenth segment of the Brahmanic rites is called *phāladhānam*, 'the giving of fruits' in which the bride and groom present tributes of fruit and betel nut to honoured guests. The Brahman prepares two *tāmbulam* leaves with a five paise coin and a piece of betel nut (*ceḳka*) and hands it with a banana to the bride. She gives two such tributes to the Brahman and then one to her father. The groom presents them to his family Carpenter, to his relatives, distinguished guests, and then to the bride's father. There follows a presentation of payments to service castes who have participated in the rituals and to the Brahman priest. The Washerman of the groom's family is given Rs. 20 by the bride's family and Rs. 10 by the groom's. At this point there is often a controversy over the amount owed to the Washermen who often demand more than is initially offered them. Next the Brahman is paid Rs. 14 by the families of the bride and groom—Re.1 from each family for a palm leaf written with astrological information on auspicious timing for the wedding, Re. 1 each for the *bāsikam*, and Rs. 5 each for performing the ceremonies.

The final segment of the Brahmanical rites is the *āsīrvadincaḍam*, 'the blessing'. First, accompanied by drumming while he chants mantras, the Brahman unties the cloths that have linked the bride and groom. They stand and respectfully touch the feet of the priest, first the groom and then the bride. He throws yellow rice on their heads and says a prayer of blessing. The bride and then the groom touch the feet of the bride's father who puts yellow rice on their heads. They repeat this for several other relatives including the *atta* of the groom. Along with the auspicious woman, she leads the groom, holding the little finger of the bride's left hand, into the groom's house to do a *daṇḍam* salute to the family ancestors in the household shrine. This concludes the first day's ceremonies as the bride's family Washerman takes the cloth over the *peṇḍḷi pīnu* getting to keep the rice on it, and the bride's father takes custody of the rice bundle (*arasāla kaṭṭu*).

Since all of this has taken place in the early hours of the morning there are not many hours left to rest until the second day's activities begin. The Yatapalem Washermen bring the wedding palanquin out of storage, assembling all its decorative tassels and making sure that its ornaments—representing an elephant head at the front and a line of colourful embroidered parrots along its curved centre pole—are in place. Men of the Barber, Mala, Madiga, and Jangam castes begin drumming at around 9 a.m. as the groom and bride do a *daṇḍam* salute at the

groom's household shrine before entering the palanquin. The groom holds a knife upright in his right hand. Impaled on it is a banana, a device for warding off or appeasing ghosts that may hover, enviously attracted to the scene.

The groom and bride do look striking in their fresh, new wedding clothes and jewelry. As a precaution against evil eye, highly likely to strike because they are so fortunate and admired, the groom has a specially elaborate forehead mark, *diṣṭi boṭṭu*—resembling a 'V' with down-turned lines on either side, a vertical line through the centre, all sitting on a horizontal line—and is smeared with pot soot on his chin, cheek, and nose to make him fictively defective and hence less enviable. The groom typically wears a pair of sunglasses, to make him look more stylish and adult. In other ways, too the couple are treated as visiting dignitaries or deities in procession as Barber women fan them and the groom's father offers the groom expensive bottled soft drinks and cigarettes, the smoking of which in the presence of elders would normally be considered an impertinence. The bride, on the other hand, is encouraged to avert her eyes and look demurely shy.

With them in the palanquin are foods and dowry offerings: a brass tray and water vessel (*cembu*) overflowing with turmeric roots, a stalk of bananas, a basket of turmeric roots woven of alternating strips of turmeric and vermillion coloured fibers, five green coconuts, a tray with twenty fried confections known as *arisulu* (spoken of as ten 'pairs' of *arisulu)*, stainless steel plates, a tray of turmeric-stained yellow rice, and a vessel holding water and mango leaves.

A team of eight Washermen bears the palanquin, slowly moving it along the village street. Periodically they are given drinks of country rum as tips and to make the burden seem easier in the hot sun. A female relative of the groom, such as his elder sister or his father's elder sister, carries the rice bundle on her head as she walks beside the palanquin. Two other Washermen bring along more of the dowry goods—called *sarē*—which they carry suspended from long poles balanced on their shoulders. Among the items given by the bride's family for the setting up of the new household are many brass vessels (approximately twenty) filled to the brim with turmeric roots, a brass container (*bariṇi*) for the bride's vermillion powder, eating bowls, plates, cups, *pūja* trays, a serving spatula, a four-cup tray for serving curries, stainless steel and aluminium vessels and trays, and a wooden shelf for the display and storage of these items inside a house.

The first goal of the procession is the village Rama temple. There the palanquin halts and the groom and bride are carried up the steps of the temple to have *darśanam* (auspicious sight) of the god, do a *daṇḍam* salute, and take *prasādam*. When they get back into the palanquin, the groom

and bride are accompanied by two small children. These are close relatives such as the groom's younger brother or elder sister's son and the bride's younger sister or younger brother. They ride along so that the couple's good fortune will influence them to grow up and have their marriages performed.

The procession wends its way back to the house[18] and its wedding shed amidst exuberant drumming, joyful displays of stick twirling by men, and the singing of wedding songs by women and some men, too. One of the most important songs has the refrain which is sung by women, 'the auspiciousness of Lakshmi's wedding, the wealth/splendour of Gauri's wedding' (*lakṣmi kalyaṇamō saubhagyam, gauri kalyaṇamō vabhagyam*). Periodically the procession halts for the Madigas to make their drumheads taut by heating them over fires, and to give Washermen glasses of country rum. One display of Madiga drumming involves making a coin leap off a drum placed on the ground with the vibrations of another drum beaten loudly near it.

The groom and bride are lifted out of the palanquin at the *toraṇam*, leaf festoon next to their wedding canopy. There evil eye is removed through *nivāli*, the successive raising and lowering of rice balls—first one that is turmeric stained, then one that is soot stained, and a third that is vermillion stained—and a lighted oil wick, each item being thrown over the exorciser's shoulder. Next the fathers-in-law, fathers of the groom and bride, *yerakāḷḷu*, pour turmeric water over the leaf festoon back and forth into each other's vessels, exchanging vessels several times. This symbolic mixing takes on an increasingly competitive cast as the pouring back and forth becomes more rapid, almost as if they are trying to throw the water at each other. After about four to six exchanges they pour the water at the base of the *toraṇam*.

The groom and bride are made to sit on a cot as a crowd of women and girls gathers around them. The groom's elder sister washes his feet and asks him if he will give his children to marry hers, '*tammuḍu, pillanu ittāvā*', 'younger brother, will you give your children'? After he refuses to answer the first two times, he says 'yes' the third time. The women then sing wedding songs, including the songs mentioning Lakshmi's and Gauri's weddings. The groom and bride are then made to play a game while seated on the cot that obliquely alludes to their 'fruitfulness', prosperity, the groom's longevity and the bride's auspicious status. The couple are given the following items to toss back and forth to each other—a green coconut, a banana, a gold wedding locket, and coins.

The groom and bride have a meal at the groom's family household shrine during which she eats off of his plate after he is finished, symbolising her subordination to him. Except for a *bhajana* at the village Rama

temple and the performance of a Satyanarayana Vratam by some families before the meal (in thanks giving for the marriage having taken place) there is no more activity that day. Meanwhile the wedding palanquin is taken round to all the other couples being married the same day. Often, records of film songs (hired wind-up gramophones amplified over loud speakers using power from motor-car batteries) play incessantly throughout the day and night.

On the third day of the wedding, the first ceremony is for the removal of the *kankaṇam* wrist threads and *bāsikālu* forehead pads. Between 10 and 11 a.m. the groom and bride sit on a cloth which covers the seating platforms on the *peṇḍli pīnu*. They are separated by an auspicious wife who sits in the middle on the overturned grindstone. In a repetition of the nail-cutting ceremony, the groom, auspicious wife, and bride are smeared with turmeric and *nalugu*. After the groom is playfully smeared with pot soot by his wife's elder brother, with whom he has a joking relationship, a canopied procession goes to a well to fetch water in three pots. Madiga, Barber and Jangam drummers lead the procession of the two ceramic and one brass pot each with a turmeric root tied to its rim just as in the nail-cutting ceremony. The pots are placed down on small piles of unhusked rice, turmeric is added to their water which is mixed between them, and a thread is tied connecting them. The groom's Barber washes him with water from the pots. Then the bride is bathed by female relatives of the groom. At this point several babies are also washed in the highly auspicious water. As water is poured into their hands in addition to yellow rice, the groom and then the bride are made to face each of the four cardinal directions to perform *daṇḍam* salutes to deities in each. Deities mentioned are *dēvuḍu*, ('god', meaning Rama), and the village goddesses—Bandamma, Ravalamma, Maridamma, and Bangaramma.

The groom and bride change into new clean clothes and sit down facing each other across a black ceramic pot. The bride removes the *kankaṇam* string from the groom's right wrist and then the *bāsikam* from his neck, placing these items in a tray of husked rice. The groom then removes the bride's *bāsikam* and wrist thread. He is instructed to take care to untie the knot since it is prohibited to cut or break the string. The rice in the tray is then placed in the bride's sari end which already has had turmeric roots placed in it.

Next begins the ring game, a stylized competition between the groom and bride which is also one of the first occasions for their physical contact with each other. Three rings are dropped into the pot between them, one of copper, one of silver, and one of gold. The groom and bride plunge their right hands into the pot struggling to retrieve the rings. The crowd looks on happily and waits with excited anticipation to see whether the husband

or the wife will succeed in retrieving the most valued gold ring. When the wife wins, girls in the crowd cheer. This dipping for rings is played for three rounds, the last being said to be the most significant in terms of predicting the future of the couple's relationship—whether the husband or the wife will be dominant.

The groom and bride are then led by the auspicious wife around the wedding pole three times as she pours water from a small vessel. The groom and bride then do a *daṇḍam* salute to the pole, in front of which has been placed an offering of food on a leaf plate, and go into the groom's house to do a salute at his god corner in front of which are food offerings and an oil lamp. The bride takes the contents of her sari end—turmeric roots placed there when she put the sari on and husked rice from the plate on which the wrist and forehead strings were placed—and throws them into the attic or roof storage area of the house. She throws three times, each time facing in a different direction. She then takes a small amount of cooked rice from a heap that has been prepared to serve to guests and throws it back on the pile. This act is said to end the ceremony as small children, especially of service castes such as Barbers, are encouraged to eat the food from the leaf plate at the wedding pole. Inside, the groom eats from a food plate at the god corner, leaving food for his bride to eat after him.

That afternoon the groom and bride depart for the bride's village in the start of the *yānālu*, repeated trips back and forth between the bride's and groom's households. Along with them goes the ceremonial rice bundle and the ceramic pot used in the ring dipping game. In addition to members of the bride's family a brother or close friend of the groom goes along too. He is called the *tōḍapeḷḷikoḍuku*, 'co-groom,' and stays in the bride's house overnight with the groom. When the wedding party enters the wife's village it first goes to the Rama temple for the groom and bride to pay their respects in the form of a *daṇḍam* salute. They then proceed to the bride's home where her mother greets them with a plate of three coloured rice balls for performing the ritual of removing evil eye that has come on them during their journey.

The following day, the fourth since the day of the *lagnam*, the groom and bride remain at the bride's parents' house. On the fifth day, the bride's family gives a *yānālu* feast, of non-vegetarian food to members of the groom's family who come for the occasion. The groom's party then returns with the newlyweds to the groom's house. On the seventh day the couple returns to the bride's family. On the eighth day several elders of the groom's family or village go to have a meal at the bride's house and fetch the couple back to the groom's village for ten to fifteen days. Then the bride's family takes her back on her own without her

husband for ten days or so. If she has already physically come of age, a consummation ceremony, *gārbhādānam*, is held. If not, the bride resumes life at her parents' home with occasional visits to her husband's until she does.

In any case, there is a period of avoidance that follows the wedding season. It is the lunar month of *āṣādha* (June-July) during which the bride remains at her parents' home and the newlyweds are not permitted to be together, with a single exception, the so-called *puvvula yātra*, 'flower pilgrimage', or *giri pradakṣiṇa*, 'mountain circumambulation' to the temple of Sri Varaha Narasimha Swamy on the mountain of Simhachalam outside of Visakhapatnam. It is customary for newlyweds to attend this pilgrimage but they are not permitted to repeat it for another three years. The custom is to walk 25 km to the mountain, circumambulate it some 32 km clockwise, stopping at the Bay of Bengal at daybreak to bathe, climb to the temple, enter the sanctuary to have *darśanam*, present *pūja* offerings, and receive *prasādam*. After viewing the idol, a lingam-like mound of sandalwood paste that encases a statue of Simhadri Appanna (combining attributes of the Boar and Narasimha avatars of Lord Vishnu) the pilgrims eat meals in the temple precincts, smearing pillars with turmeric panels to recreate their family household shrines. The pilgrims who attend this *yātra* that takes place on the full moon day of *aṣāḍha* month are predominantly Gavaras of the Anakapalli region. The townspeople of Visakhapatnam are generally unaware of it.

The consummation ceremony (or *garbhadānamuhūrtam*, 'auspicious moment for giving the gift of the womb') forms the culmination of the passage of the woman to her husband's family. A typical ceremony takes place in the evening in the house of the groom's family. The bride is brought by five of her relatives who are auspicious wives, such as her elder sister and her mother's sisters. When they come they bring gifts—a tray of five green coconuts, a stalk of bananas, a plate of sweetmeats, a plate of pairs of *arisulu* fried confections, *pulihora* (cooked yellow rice), and a plate with a bedspread. First a snack is eaten, consisting of the items brought by the bride's party. Then the groom's side offers a meal such as aubergine and potato curries, dal, and a watery flavourful tamarind sauce (*cāru*).

As the auspicious time (*muhūrtam*) approaches, the groom changes into a fresh dhoti and the bride is adorned with flowers and wears her wedding sari. The groom and bride are taken into the inner room of the house and sit on a bed facing one another. The relatives gather round them and have them play several games. The first consists of tossing items representing fruitfulness back and forth between them—a green coconut, bananas, and a ball of jasmine flowers. Onlookers toss turmeric-

smeared rice on them and another game begins. The bride is given two half-rupee coins and hides them in one of her fists. The groom has to guess which hand they are in. Then the groom holds the coins and the bride guesses and vice versa.

The bride's mother gives the groom some money (such as a ten rupee note) and a ring made of half a tola of gold. Then the groom's mother lights a camphor flame (*hārati*) and waves it on a tray in a circular motion up-and-down in front of the bride while singing a song of *mangaḷam*.[19] A crowd of some twenty women and five men encircles the couple as the bride is formally handed over to the groom's family. The groom is made to hold the hands of the bride and then the groom's elder brother or father holds hands with them and the bride's mother as the latter gives responsibility for her daughter over to her new son-in-law. The groom's brother's wife holds the hands of the bride, the bride's mother, and the groom. Promises are made to give the bride to the groom and for the groom's side to take care of her. Milk is poured in the combined hands of the bride and groom (repeating a step in the wedding ceremony) and women sing the song with the refrain, 'the auspiciousness of Lakshmi's wedding, the wealth/splendour of Gauri's wedding.' A plate of sweets and fruits is placed between the bride and groom. The groom takes a bite and then gives some to his bride who eats the rest.[20] The atmosphere becomes increasingly jovial as the women laugh and express their happiness. A woman from the groom's family prepares betel leaf tribute offerings to the groom's father and honoured guests. These include two bananas—one from the groom and one from the bride. The groom's father returns a piece of banana as a form of *prasādam*, to his son and new daughter-in-law. Then all leave the couple in the room and close the door.

Major Symbolic Themes Expressed in Weddings

In the preceding description of Gavara marriage customs a number of important symbolic themes emerge. We will discuss these from two perspectives, first as expressions of power relations and second as a body of symbolic techniques. It will be seen that, in addition to being a rite of passage for a groom and bride, a wedding is a forum for statements and actions regarding the authority of elders, the relations between caste fellows, the role of service castes, and the importance of deference to superiors. Among the principal symbolic themes we consider are the use of knot-tying, the importance of turmeric and auspicious wives, and the role of astrological timing.

Role of elders. Marriages are occasions on which family and caste elders exert their authority. The search party for a suitable bride is a delegation

PLATE 1 Yatapalem tank and Galikonda hill

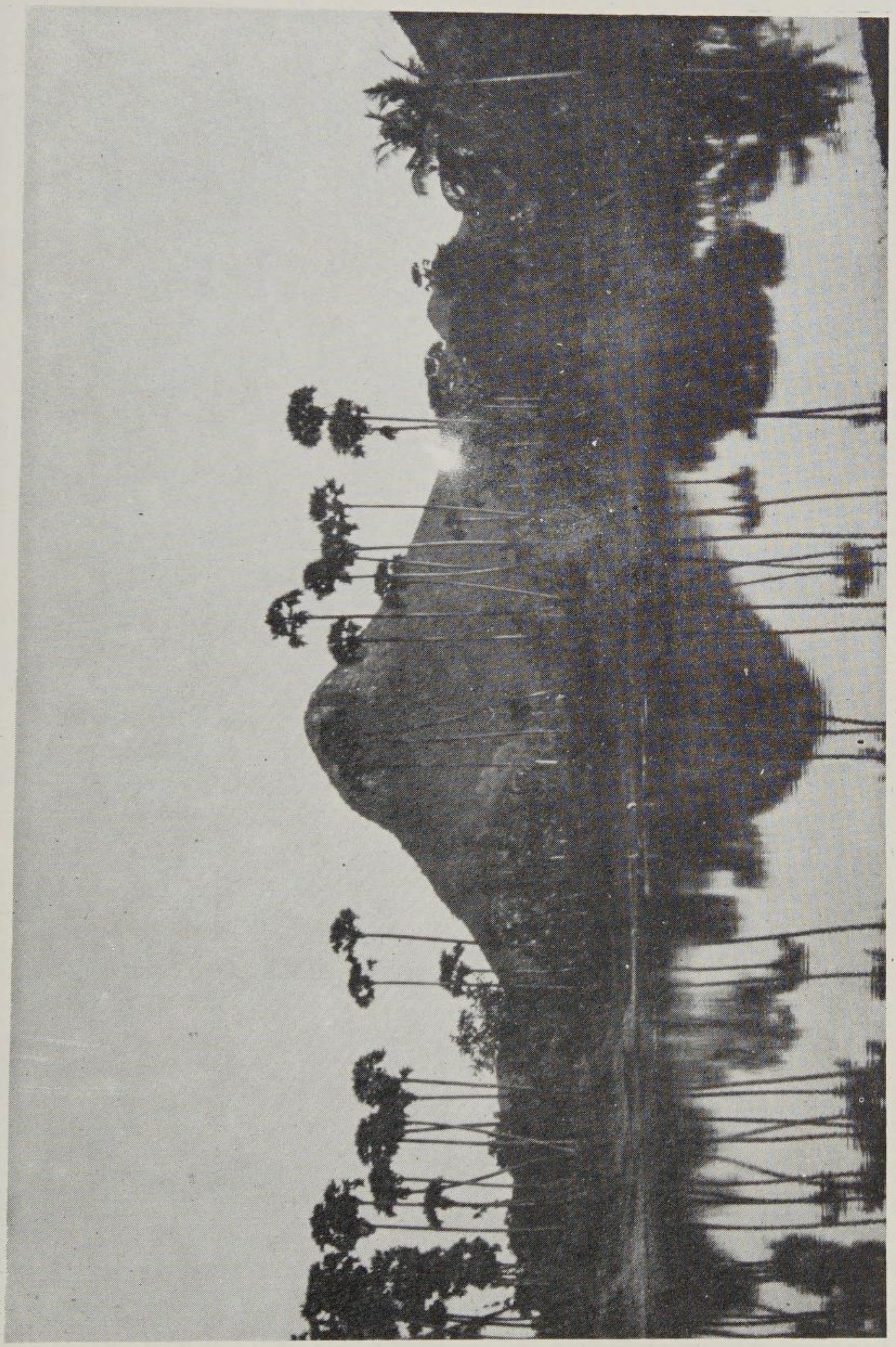
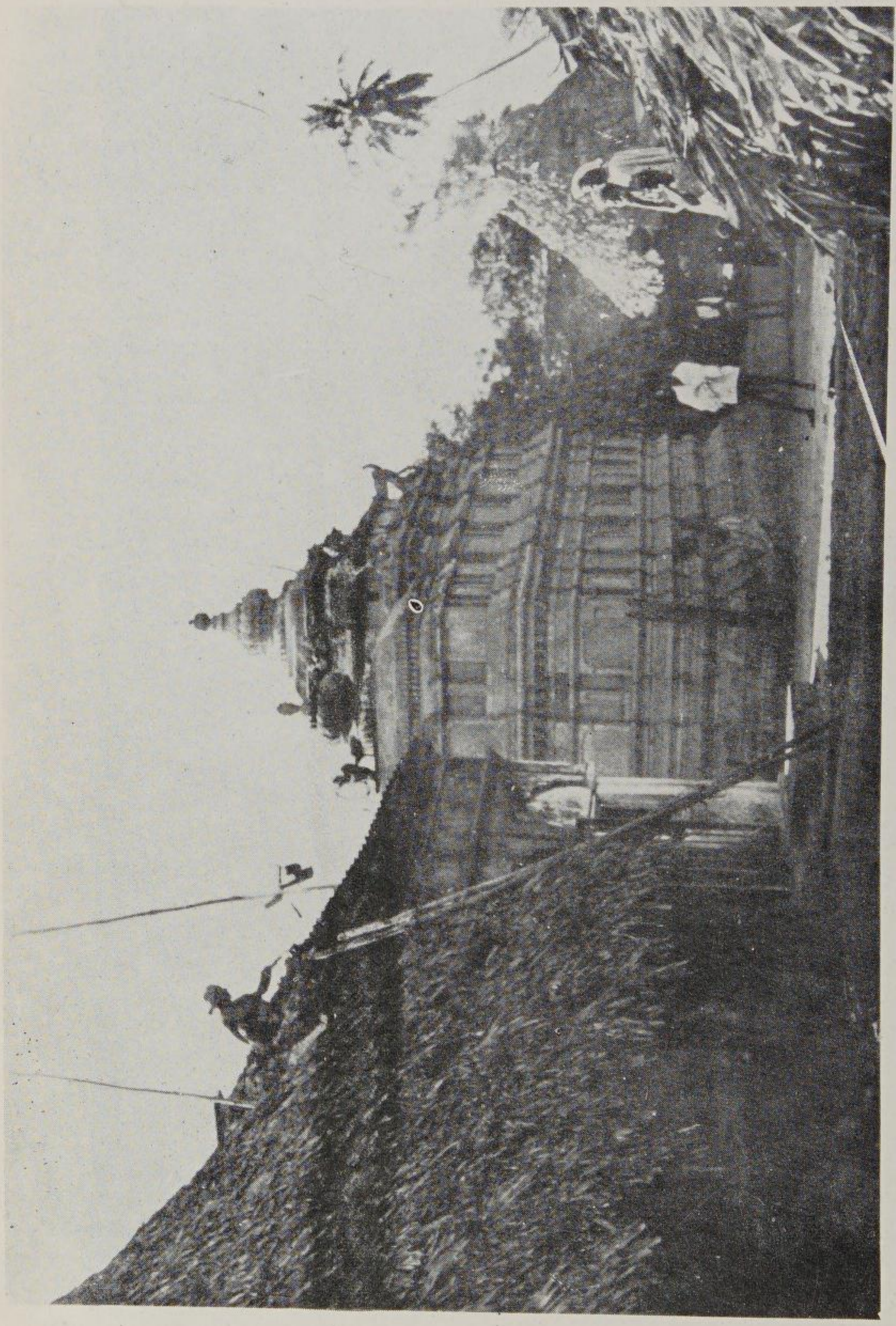


PLATE 2 The new Rama temple in Yatapalem



The spires of the new temple rise behind the old Rama temple (left). A sadhu is on the roof of the latter, beginning to dismantle it

PLATE 3 View of the idols in the new Rama Temple in Yatapalem

A Gavara is helping a Jangam boy *pūjāri* to prepare *prasādam* for bhajana-singers

PLATE 4 **A Gavara farmer preparing a flooded field as women transplant rice in the background**

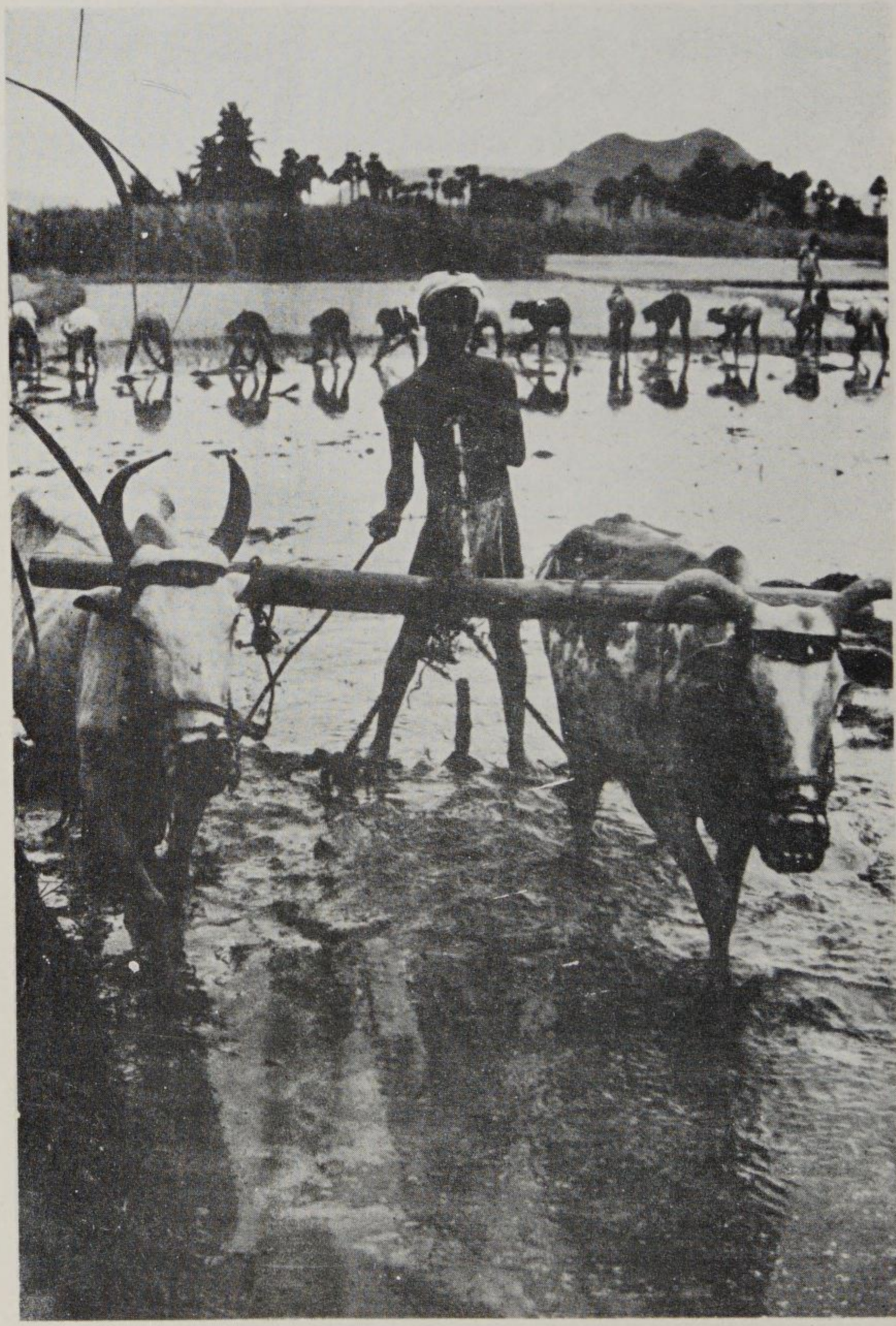


PLATE 5 **A Gavara housewife cleans her cooking stove on the verandah of her home**

PLATE 6 A Settigollu woman enjoys her baby as neighbourhood children stand by

PLATE 7 **A Gavara hearth decorated for Sankranti with auspicious *muggu* diagrams**

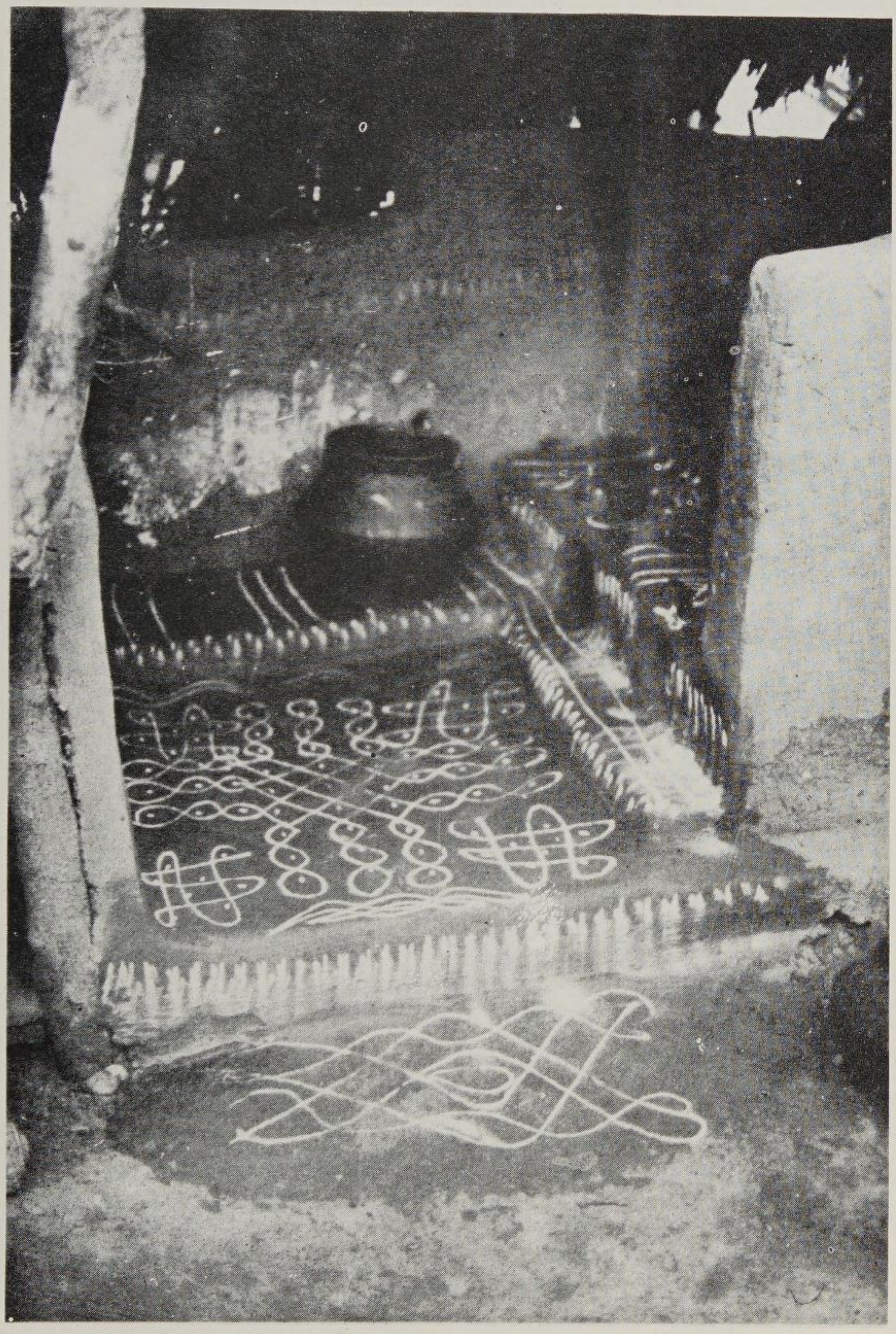
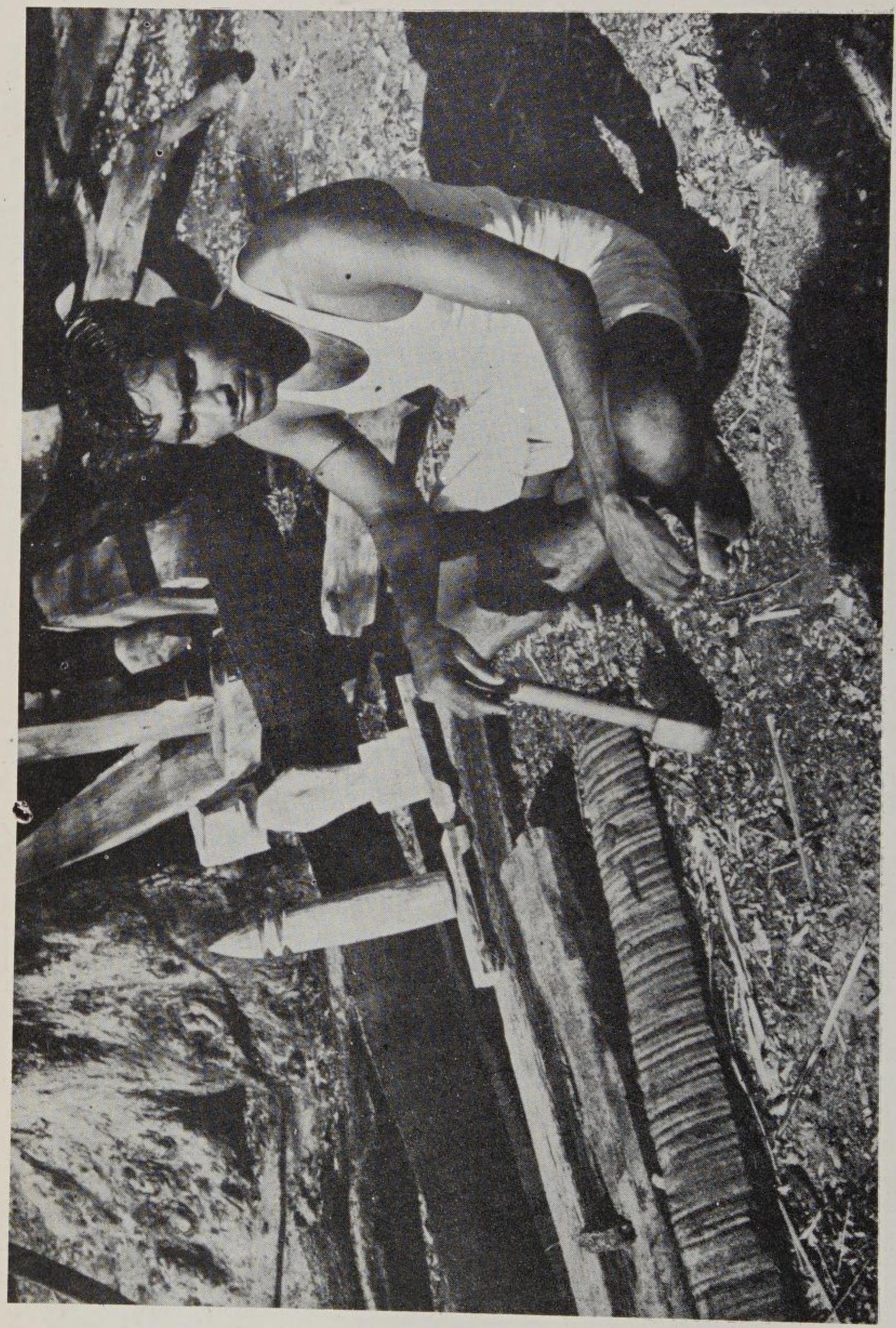


PLATE 8 A Kamsali seated next to the *patimalu* he has just carved



These idols carried in the village goddess festival procession represent the goddess (right) and her younger brother (left)

PLATE 9 **A Barber (right) steadies a *ghaṭṭa·n* pot being taken in a village goddess procession**

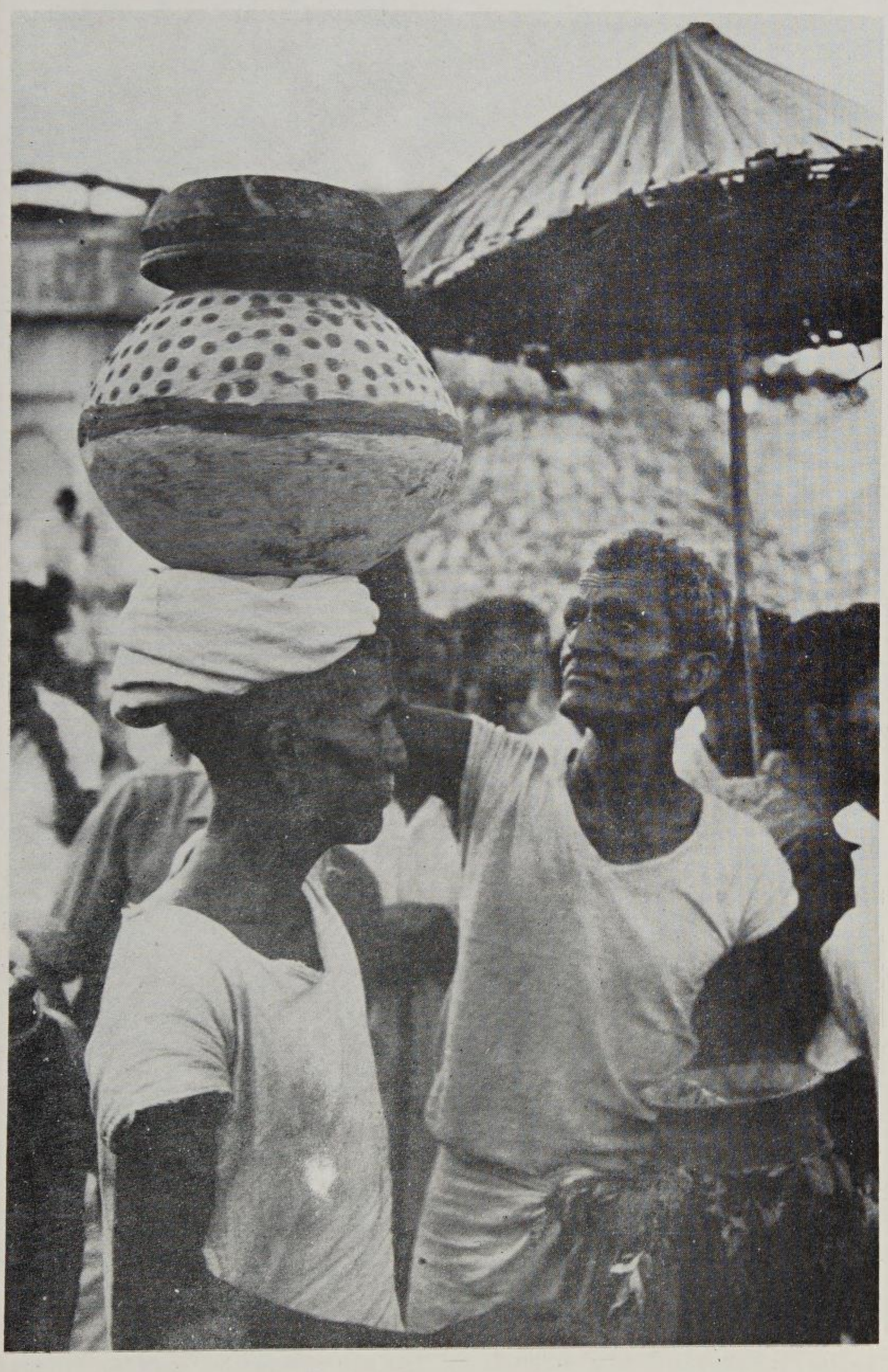


PLATE 10 *Ghaṭṭam* pots

Ghaṭṭam pots taken in the Bandamma festival procession express village unity. One has been circulated in Yatapalem, the other in Mallolla Pakalu and Aripaka

PLATE 11 Procession of brass horses for the village goddess Ravalamma

Settigollu carry the horses accompanied by Madiga drummers and other villagers

PLATE 12 Stone idol of Maridamma, inside her temple

Note offerings of children's toys (hanging above and at left) and carved wooden idols (*patimalu*) from previous triennial festivals in her honour

PLATE 13 **Jangam woman impersonates a Gavara woman who has died with her husband alive**

In the ceremony of *muṣanam*, in which she wears a huge wad of turmeric on her forehead, she releases her husband to remarry. Mud in front of her is

PLATE 14 A Konaru performs an exorcism of Yatapalem

Konaru holds a sacrificial chicken and has drawn a mystical diagram of Telugu letters

PLATE 15 A Gavara household shrine with Sankranti offerings

Seated on left is Polimera Appa Rao, son of the household head

PLATE 16 The Yatapalem Rama temple candelabrum

The candelabrum is being carried by two Gavara elders, accompanied by a Jangam woman and boys, and a Washerman boy with a brass gong—on its way to Kottapalem on Sankranti

of family and caste elders. Though the potential groom has certain veto powers over the choices they provide him, the ultimate decision is their responsibility. The wedding rituals themselves are as much occasions for activating the parents' kinship and friendship ties as they are focused on the groom and bride. As we have seen, the readings (*cadivimpulu*) of monetary presentations (*kaṭṇam*) from relatives and friends take at least as long as the main Brahmanical ceremonies on the first day of the rituals. In addition, what might be the most private and intimate aspect in the tie between the groom and bride, their sexual relations, is initially controlled by the elders in the *garbhadānam* consummation ceremony.

Relatives whose children are preferred marriage mates for the bride and groom are given important ritual roles, indicating the need for their consent even if the option is not being exercised. The groom's *atta* is important in the haircutting ceremony, in the *lagnam*, in the blessing, and carrying the rice bundle during the palanquin procession. When the groom is carried up to the Rama temple the procession is often led by his mother's brother (a potential father-in-law). Later, the groom's elder sister begs the groom to promise to give his children to hers in marriage. The joking relationship of a groom with his wife's brother—being smeared with pot soot by him or receiving joke gifts as a *kaṭṇam*—also alludes to the potential marriage to an elder sister's daughter.

Household shrine or god corner, dēvuḍu mūla. The sanction of family ancestors, authorities even higher than the living elders, is also necessary and sought through activities at the household shrine of the groom's family. *Pūja* is performed at the household shrine in connection with the betrothal ceremony as well as during the various wedding rites. The tying of the wedding locket that officially seals the marriage bond is performed at the household shrine rather than under the canopy in front of the house, the scene of most of the other procedures. The first ceremonial meal of the newly-weds also takes place at the household shrine as does the salute before the groom and bride depart for the bride's house after the wedding.

Stylised tensions. During the course of the wedding rituals we observe the expression of tensions, controversies or challenges to strictly defined statuses and roles. Some appear to stem from genuine tensions in the definition of relationships such as in the haggling between the bride's family attempting to hand over less *kaṭṇam* than they originally agreed to exchange with the groom's family or members of service castes who demand more payment than is originally offered. Other instances appear to be stylizations of potential tensions that are incorporated as part of the ritual and in a sense defused as a result. Often during the *tālambrālu*

stage of the Brahmanical rituals the repeated pouring of hulled rice by the groom and bride over each other's heads takes on a playfully aggressive tone, apparently presaging tensions in the relationship between the two. The ring-dipping game during the ceremony to remove the wrist and forehead strings seems to have the same purpose. In a similar vein is the pouring of turmeric water back and forth between the fathers of the groom and bride. This also tends to become something of a free-for-all as it speeds up. Since their relationship is still in the process of definition, this ritual appears to be an outlet for the expression of tensions in the relationship.

Role of service castes. The wedding rituals are occasions on which ties with service castes are fully activated and ceremonial duties explicitly delineated. Barbers are perhaps the most prominent, providing drumming and performing the ritual bathing of the bride and groom. They also make the forehead pads (*bāsikam*) for which they receive a special payment. Washermen carry a flaming torch throughout the Brahmanical ceremony which generally takes place at night (petromax pressure lamps notwithstanding) and carry the wedding palanquin in procession the next day, also carrying a torch even though it is in daylight. The ceremonial caste duty of carrying a torch is more significant than the mere provision of light when it is dark. A Jangam, at least one Mala, and a contingent of Madigas, each playing their special variety of drum, are other castes whose duties are considered essential to the proceedings. Their drumming is constant during all important stages of the ritual and creates the heightened dramatic atmosphere of all ceremonies.

Payments (*kaṭṇam*) to both families' service castes who perform these jobs are traditionally fixed. However, there are often controversies over the exact amounts due, analogous to the stylised tension and haggling witnessed when service castes, especially Barbers and Washermen, are paid for their secular services. Nowadays most of the payments are in cash, but payments in kind also feature prominently. The bride's family's Washerman is entitled to take the considerable amounts of husked rice, which the groom and bride ceremonially pour over each other's heads, and the cloth they sit on during the Brahmanical ritual. The Brahman priest who officiates at the ritual also receives payment in both cash and kind in this manner. The custom of payment in kind at weddings provides a reference to the long-term economic relationships between castes, in which payment in kind predominates as opposed to payment in cash.

Service castes also feature prominently in attending the feast given by the groom's family. Not only does this serve as a public statement of their inferiority and dependence on the Gavaras, it also enables the groom's

family to gain merit through *dānam*, 'virtuous gift-giving.' A message here is that the success of the wedding and the well-being of the donor's family is achieved through fulfilling responsibilities to others.

Symbolisation of hierarchy: *tribute*. Solely in terms of economic relations, the Brahman is not distinguishable from the other service castes—Barbers, Washermen and Harijans. It takes symbolic forms to maintain the social hierarchy. Apart from the fact that a Brahman priest is attributed with superior ritual powers (the knowledge and proper reciting of ritual formulae, such as *mantrams*), his superiority is gesturally acknowledged by the bride and groom who touch his feet and salute him with a *daṇḍam*. This is a particularly potent symbol that makes use of the notion of the feet as the lowest-ranked part of the body. Touching another's feet implies that even the lowest part of that person is higher than one's self. As we have already pointed out, such ritual saluting (implying subordination and hierarchy) is the quintessential element in all ritual worship, and can also be discerned in the elaborate concern for astrologically auspicious timings for ceremonies.

Series of symbolic *daṇḍam* hand gestures recur throughout the course of the wedding rituals. These occur in sequences which identify, by association, the subordination to elders, ancestors, Brahman priests, any persons of higher status, gods and village goddesses. This subordination also carries the connotation that blessing and well-being is its result. Examples of this are observed at the end of the Brahmanical wedding ceremony when the groom and bride touch and salute the feet of the Brahman priest. They immediately do the same to the groom's father and women of the category *atta* (bride's mother, father's sister, classificatory father's sister) and then perform a salute at the household shrine. On the first visit of the groom and bride to the bride's home, there is a similar sequence of salutes in the village Rama temple, to the bride's parents, and the bride's household shrine.

Other ritual tributes are observed in the form of the betel leaf and areca nut offerings to distinguished guests that attended the Brahmanical ceremony and the consummation ritual.[21]

Knot-tying, back and forth actions and mixing. Ritual techniques other than those already discussed—the performance of *pūja*, the profering of ritual tribute and the generation of merit through sharing food and wealth—are prominent in weddings. One of the most striking is the use of knot-tying to express the concept of the joining of previously separate individuals into a new entity, the married couple. Knots feature from the early stages of tying a *kankaṇam* to the wedding post, *rāṭa*. They

continue through the tying of *kankaṇams* to the bathing pots, the tying of the ceremonial rice bundle, the tying of the forehead and wrist strings, the tying of the wedding locket, the knotting of bride and groom together with a cloth (*brahma mūla*), and then the ceremonial untying of this cloth, followed later by the removal of the wrist and forehead strings. The significance of these examples of untying appears to be an analogy with the removal of strings which have been used to hold things in place while they are being glued or spliced together. Once the primary bond is set they are no longer needed.

Similar to the pattern of knot-tying is the repetition of back and forth actions that work symbolically to bind the groom and bride together. Pouring rice over each other's heads during the *tālambrālu*, toe-touching (to link nerves believed to connect the toe with the sexual organs—wearing rings prevents other men from touching that nerve), games of tossing items back and forth during the removal of *kankaṇams* and during the consummation ceremony—all allude to the sexual linkage of the couple. The journeys back and forth between the groom's and bride's houses for *yānālu* meals express the transition of the bride from her natal home to that of her new husband. The pouring of turmeric water back and forth between the fathers of the groom and bride expresses the mixing of their two families. The mixing of turmeric water between the pots for bathing the groom and bride appears to be a similar statement.[22]

Timing. Considerations of astrologically auspicious timings dominate all main and subsidiary steps in the ceremonies—the various journeys by the boy's family in search of a suitable bride, the betrothal ceremony in which a symbolic smearing of the bride-to-be with turmeric seals the engagement, the raising of the ceremonial post (*rāṭa*) beside which the actual wedding rites take place, the tying of the marriage locket on the bride (*mangalasūtram*), the consummation (*garbhādānam*) ceremony, and the removal of the ceremonial post and bridal canopy. Overarching all of these considerations is the fact that weddings are seen as part of the annual calendrical cycle. They all take place at a particular season of the year and most within a few weeks of each other in the hot, dry, slack agricultural period around *vaiśakha* month (April-May).

Turmeric. Turmeric with its brilliant yellow colour occurs as a central symbolic substance in a large number of contexts throughout the wedding rituals and epitomises the auspiciousness of the married state and the link with auspicious wifehood. Turmeric is the essential element in the betrothal ceremony which itself is referred to as *pasupu rāyaḍam*, 'the applying of turmeric'; turmeric is smeared on the marriage post (*rāṭa*)

and decorated with vermillion horizontal lines, and a turmeric-smeared thread tied around a leaf is secured to the post. When three pots are brought from the well for bathing the bride and groom on the first and last days of the wedding ceremony, one pot has a turmeric root tied to it, another pot has turmeric paste mixed into its water, and the bride and groom are smeared all over with turmeric before being washed. At another point, the auspicious wife who sits with the bride is smeared by other auspicious wives with turmeric along with the bride. In the wedding rituals conducted by the Brahman priest, a wad of turmeric paste with a vermillion dot on it is used to represent the god Ganapati, lord of beginnings and remover of obstacles. Turmeric roots are placed on ceremonial plates of hulled, uncooked rice, and turmeric is smeared on the strings of the wrist thread (*kankaṇam*) and forehead thread (*bāsikam*) which holds a turmeric-coloured yellow and red pad in place in the middle of the forehead. Turmeric and vermillion are smeared on the wedding locket and the ceremonial cloth that is tied between the bride and groom. Throughout the ceremony, turmeric-dyed rice (*acintalu*) is thrown or dropped on items being worshipped or on to the bride and groom. Several kilos of turmeric roots fill the brass vessels that form part of the bride's dowry which is carried on a shoulder-yoke by the family washerman during a palanquin procession around the village. Turmeric is also mixed into the water which is ceremonially poured between the pots of the father of the groom and the father of the bride.

Auspicious wives. The importance of auspicious wives (*pēraṇṭālu*), married women with their husbands still alive, is a central theme in the wedding ceremony. Indeed, a wedding is itself the way in which an immature girl attains the status of auspicious wife. The presence of auspicious wives is essential in the betrothal ceremony at which turmeric is distributed to them. Auspicious wives are required for the raising of the ceremonial wedding post (*rāṭa*), and widows are prohibited from attending. Auspicious wives fetch water to bathe the groom and bride and perform the *suvvi* song, touching the groom and bride to pass on their auspiciousness. At the Brahmanical wedding rites an auspicious wife sits between the bride and groom throughout the entire proceedings and auspicious wives touch and bless the wedding locket before it is tied. Clearly, the involvement of auspicious wives is intended to enable the bride to live her life as an auspicious, submissive wife too.

Preparation of ritual zones. Another technique that recurs in wedding ceremonies is the creation of auspicious zones for the ritual activities to take place in. The raising of the wedding pole (*rāṭa*) tied with branches

of milk-exuding plants that flower during the marriage season—alluding to a hoped for fecundity of the match and the production of mother's milk—inaugurates the construction of the large covered shed (*pandiri*) within which the rituals take place. That these define important zones is evidenced in the prohibition of one couple from viewing the shed of another during their palanquin ride. Another way in which an auspicious zone is demarcated is the auspicious diagram (*penḍḷi pīnu*) carved in the ground on which the groom and bride sit. This is further washed with purifying cowdung water and decorated with auspicious white *muggu* designs. The *penḍḷi pīnu* area is also set off with an overturned kitchen grinding stone on which the auspicious wife sits, and encircled by four yokes expressing the linking together of husband and wife as a team.

Other special ritual zones are created by the erection of a *toraṇam*—two poles connected with a festoon of mango leaves—and the respectful placing of husked rice on the ground as an auspicious 'seat' for the pots used to bathe the couple.

Passing of influences. Presence, sight, touch, and feeding are all means by which influences can be passed during weddings. Being in the presence of deities—either at the household shrine, or during the pilgrimage by newly-weds to Simhachalam temple—looking at the star Arundati, or seeing auspicious wives is a potent means of securing auspicious influence for the couple and their families.

At the same time sight can bring negative influences. Because the groom and bride are considered to be the object of such good fortune and are treated like deities in their palanquin ride many people cannot help being jealous of them. Hence at numerous points throughout the wedding rituals precautions are taken to make them fictively unattractive with soot smears or periodically draw out evil eye (*diṣṭi*) and cast it off.

The passing of auspicious influences by touch is discernible in the touching of the groom and bride with rice pounding poles by auspicious wives when they sing the *suvvi* song during the nail-cutting ceremony. Auspicious wives are also encouraged to touch the bride's wedding locket before it is tied around her neck.

The giving of food, in addition to expressing notions of social relations—equality when shared with caste mates and inferiority when accepted by service castes—is a potent generator of *puṇyam*, merit, which we note in other contexts exerts positive intervention by deities on the giver's behalf. The rituals thus channel the competitive drive for family success into altruistic affirmations of social interdependence with castemates and obligations to protect inferiors.

Other actions serve to transfer some of the auspiciousness of the newly-

weds to young children so that they might grow up healthy and have weddings performed for them. This is the reason for young children riding in the wedding palanquin, and for women to bathe their children in the wedding bath water or to encourage them to eat food from the plate offered at the ceremonial wedding pole.

FUNERALS

Of all the various life cycle rituals, funerals are the most revealing of the definition and differentiation of social statuses. Whereas people are born and married at the same stage in their life, death can occur at any point to persons of all statuses, and funerary customs mark the major differences in status which are considered socially significant. The main status distinctions they make are as follows: male versus female, pre- versus post-puberty, auspicious woman versus widow. Funerary customs do not just reflect social categories, however. They also create and maintain the ideology of the auspicious woman and define the role of women. By mobilizing emotions and actions behind the symbols of the auspicious woman they create categories which are accepted as axiomatic.

Statuses and Roles in Funerals

Age statuses are marked in Gavara funerary rituals by differences in the treatment of the corpse. Generally, sexual maturity is the dividing line between burial and cremation. The sex of the deceased is differentiated by females being placed face down and males face up in a grave or on a pyre. The inauspiciousness of widowhood (i.e. of a woman whose husband dies before she does) is symbolically defined by the emphasis on and exaltation of the contrasting status of women who are not widows. In Telugu a terminological identification is made between a young unmarried girl, called *bāla-pēraṇṭālu* (*bāla*, 'young'), and a married woman whose husband is still alive, called *pēraṇṭālu*. Neither are widows and both are auspicious, in contrast with the inauspicious status of widow (*vedava* or *muṇḍa*). As we have seen, the important auspicious role of the *pēraṇṭālu* is a constant theme throughout the various life cycle rituals. Moreover, these *pēraṇṭālu* and their auspiciousness are associated with the symbolic use of turmeric (often combined with vermillion). Thus, it is not surprising to find that in the symbolic use of turmeric and vermillion there is also an identification of *bālapēraṇṭālu* with *pēraṇṭālu*. The corpses of both are smeared with turmeric and an unusually large wad of turmeric is used to form a *boṭṭu* on their forehead. In some cases this wad of turmeric paste is the size of a grapefruit. The body of a widow is not decorated with turmeric at all.

There are also two special rituals concerning the status of widowhood. If a woman's husband dies, she goes through a special widowing ceremony

in which her forehead mark (*boṭṭu*) is ceremonially washed off for the last time, her glass bangles are broken, and the cord of her wedding locket is snapped. This takes place at the southwest corner (*āgnēya-mūla*) of a village tank beyond the boundaries of the settlement proper.[23] Sorrowfully, women come to lift up a veil from her face to see her without her forehead mark for the first time. This is linked to notions about the influences of sight. If a new widow is seen for the first time in the controlled circumstances of this ritual, subsequent viewing of her will not have the same powerfully inauspicious effect than if they see her later. On the first night of this ritual she is expected to disappear and not to be seen by anyone because of the severely inauspicious effects the sight of her may have on them. This pattern exhibits the classical form of the three-part rite of passage as described by Van Gennep where the initiant goes out of society in the intermediate stage, in order to return to society with a new status.

If a married woman dies before her husband (and her husband's family, i.e. clan, belong to the *pāk.ṛutoḷḷu* funerary division), then a special additional ritual is performed for her on the eleventh day after her death (or at another time if a better auspicious moment is found) before the funerary meal. This ritual, *muṣānam*[24] is in honour of the woman as a *pēranṭālu*. In it, turmeric features as a symbolic element, including its distribution to auspicious women. But it also exhibits other interesting features which will be discussed below.

Apart from defining the status and role of widows and auspicious women, funerary customs also structure the roles of the sexes in society at large. Men are expected to be stoic, brave, matter-of-fact, and in control as they conduct the rituals. They are pressured not to show emotion. If they break down crying they visibly attempt to hold back their tears. In complete contrast, women are expected to act emotionally. At funerals in particular, women gather in circles to wail and cry, seemingly working each other up into near-hysteria on purpose. It is clear that this action has a strong symbolic content, actually-felt emotions notwithstanding. Women's wailing at funerals is highly stylized. Many repeat laments as if speaking to the dead person whose body lies in front of them with statements such as, "Oh my son, where have you gone? What will I do without you?" These laments are half sung and are pronounced with a special intonation and repeated over and over. This form of stylized wailing at funerals has close affinities to the wailing of women who wish to apply pressure on men by publicising wrongs done to them in family disputes (as described in Chapter 2). It makes tangible the ideology that women are more emotional and less controlled than men.

Women's emotional attachment (*āśa*) to their loved-ones lingers on after

their deaths. Hence, rituals in honour of a *pēraṇṭālu*, auspicious wife, who died are concerned with appeasing the dead woman's ghost (*dayam*) which continues to have *āśa*[25], attachment to her husband and family. She died an incompleted life and her ghost is feared to be jealous and therefore potentially malevolent to any subsequent wife her husband might take. Thus, a Jangam woman who impersonates her in the ritual by being possessed by her ghost is implored to give a statement that she releases her husband from his marital obligations to her. (One man explicitly described the ritual as being like getting a divorce[26] paper from the deceased woman.) Precautions are then taken to disperse the woman's ghost by transferring it into a mud image (*bomma*) which is ceremonially dissolved in the village tank. Similar techniques are used in the drawing out and throwing away of the malevolent influences of evil eye, *diṣṭi*. Villagers spoke of yet other precautions against the jealous ghost of a dead *pēraṇṭālu*. Some said they knew of cases in which remarriages were performed to a plaintain tree so that the malevolent influence (*nasṭam*) of the deceased wife would strike[27] the tree rather than the actual new wife. However, this was neither observed to take place in Yatapalem, nor did it seem to have been recently practised in the past.

Definition of Groups: Clans and Sub-clans

Funerary activities define people's membership in various groups of kinsmen. Firstly, there is the differentiation of Gavara clans on the basis of their adherence to one of the two sets of funerary rituals (*pākrutoḷḷu* who have Jangams as *pūjāris*, *cakradārulu* who have non-Brahman Vaishnavulu as *pūjāris*). The fact that clan exogamy rules have no connection with clan allegiances to funerary sects means that members of clans practising different funerary rituals constantly intermarry. This serves to emphasise the distinctiveness of clans and stress the incorporation of a woman into her husband's clan upon marriage. Not only does her death not transmit pollution to her parents or their clan, but her rites may differ from those of her parents. A person who is adopted is similarly incorporated into his adoptive parents' clan. He thus does not receive or transmit death pollution from his natal family nor transmit it to them.

Death pollution (*maila*, a term that also means 'dirt' in general) entails numerous restrictions. It is strongest for the first eleven days, after which the *pedda karma* ritual is performed and bathing is done for the first time. (The chief mourner, *talla gōrayya*, eldest son for a married man or husband for a deceased woman, eats only a bland diet of rice and dal for the first three days after the death.) Certain pollution restrictions remain for the following year or so, until the ceremony in which the deceased person is installed in the house shrine (*baṭṭalu peṭṭaḍam* 'placing of clothes' offerings).

During that period they are prohibited from doing *pūjas* at deity temples, doing *pūjas* at their own house shrines (including the annual ancestor worship at *Sankrānti*) or performing the marriage of any of their male members. A daughter is permitted to marry since the rituals take place at her husband's house and household shrine.

The 'field of transmission' of such death pollution is the crucial feature that demarcates subdivisions of Gavara clans within the village. Ostensibly clan members share death pollution since they are all considered to be related patrilaterally. However, those ties are not necessarily remembered or traceable. The symbolic sharing of death pollution and mutual participation in funerary rites is in fact a crucial factor that creates and activates the affiliation of people into sub-clans.

Chart 6 depicts the extent to which funerary participation extends throughout a sub-clan. In this case the funeral of a Rapeti clan woman was attended by sub-clan members related to her husband at least as far back as through great-grandfathers. On the other hand, no members of two Rapeti households attended. They were the descendents of a relatively recent immigrant into the village who was not of the same sub-clan.

Finally, funerary activities activate kin ties which centre on the family and household. In them, ties of kindred (including for example daughters who have married into different clans) and friendship can be observed to play important roles. Invitation to funerary meals is based on lists made of men who accompany the body to the cremation ground. A cremation of a man of relatively average standing will generally be attended only by a handful of members of his sub-clan (even if their kin ties are no longer traceable in actual fact) and close members of his family. A funeral of a man who committed suicide, bringing dishonour on his kinsmen, was only sparsely attended and perfunctorily carried out. The funeral of the village Headman was attended on a huge scale by relatives, non-relatives, and members of other castes alike. It seemed as though the entire village had turned out. This was a testimonial to his own personal standing rather than a requirement of custom. In his case, the gathering was so large at the cremation ground that, for reasons of economy, only one member of each household which participated was feasted at the funerary meal. Numerous representatives of service castes (who accept food cooked by Gavaras) also attended. Members of castes who do not accept cooked food from Gavaras (e.g. Jangam and Kamsali) were sent the raw ingredients of the meal.

Role of Service Castes

Just as in other life cycle rituals, we find various service castes playing important roles in funerary activities. The fact that they are considered

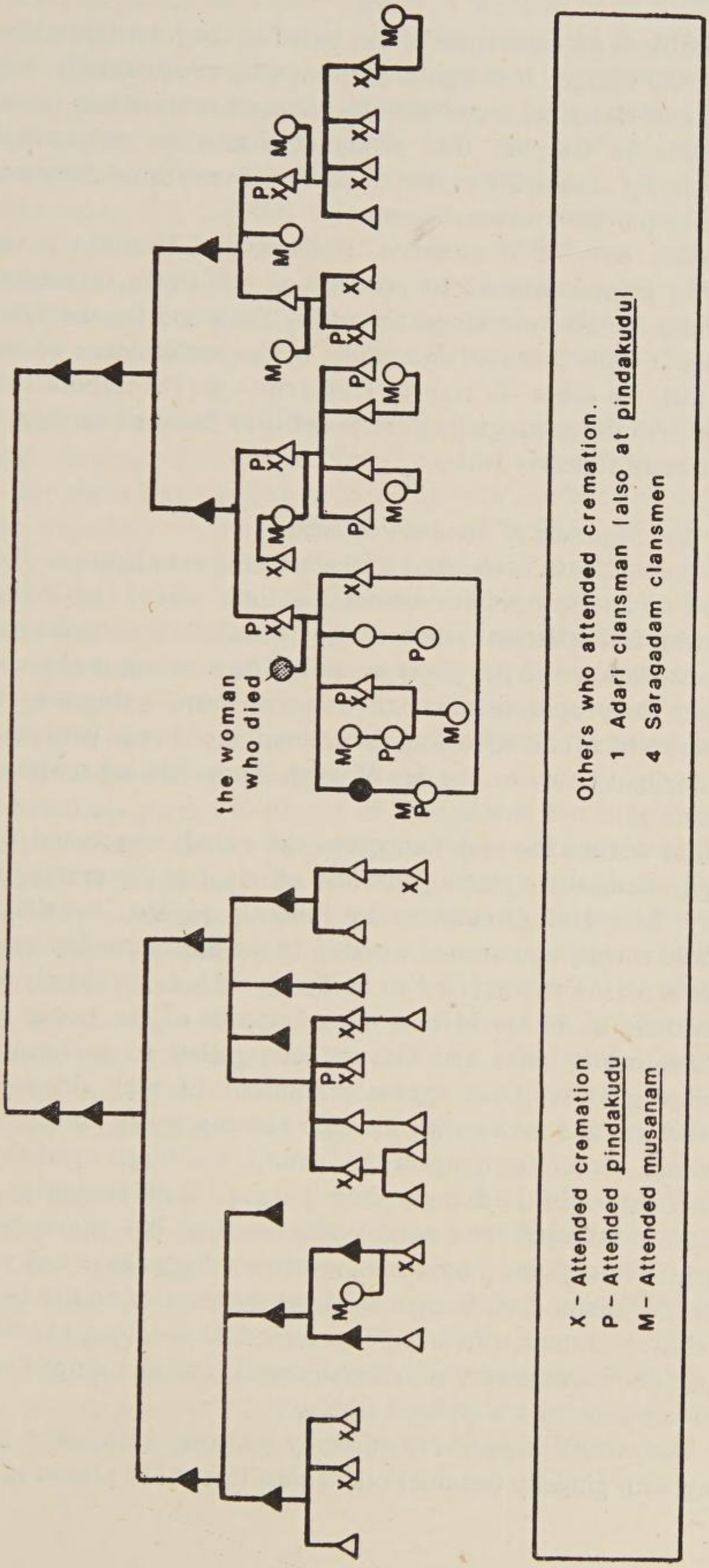

the woman who died
X - Attended cremation
P - Attended pindakudu
M - Attended musanam
Others who attended cremation.
1 Adari clansman (also at pindakudu
4 Saragadam clansmen

Chart-6 "Funerary Participation: Death of a Rapeti Clanswoman".

indispensable is an expression of the belief in the interdependence of the castes of the village. It is significant that they are primarily Washermen, Barbers, and Harijans, castes with the clearest subordinate economic and social status to Gavaras. The prominence of these service castes in the rituals clearly exemplifies the hierarchical relations between castes, between employers and employees.

The main duty of Washermen, Barbers, and Harijans is to provide drumming accompaniment to processions out to the cremation ground. Washermen are also prominent in cutting the wood for the funeral pyre, attending it while it burns, and aiding in the performance of rituals connected with the ashes. In return, Washermen get the elaborate ritual food offerings. All the participating castes get cash for their services as well as invitations to funerary feasts.

Timing and Sequence of Funerary Rituals

The time of death is checked in the astrological almanac. If the death occurred at an inauspicious time (at a time 'under the influence' of a malevolent constellation), then special rituals are undertaken to pacify that constellation and the ghost as well. The almanac is also consulted to determine the propitious moment to initiate various stages in the subsequent series of rituals following the cremation or burial (which takes place in the daylight hours on the day of death if possible, otherwise the following morning).

We now outline the major stages in the rituals concerned with death; the vigil, cremation, placing of food offerings at the cremation ground, funerary feast and ceremonies by funerary *pūjāris*, installation in the household shrine, and annual worship in the Sankranti festival.

When a person is perceived to be dying, such as an elderly or seriously ill individual, his or her body is moved outside of the house (to prevent their haunting it later) and Gavara men gather to perform a *bhajana*. This singing of religious hymns in honour of such deities as Rama, Venkatesvara, and Siva—with the men accompanying themselves with a harmonium, *madilli* (mrdangam-type drum), and finger cymbals—is aimed to calm the spirit of the dying person and send it off contented. The same procedure is followed for a person who has died but whose body awaits its funeral overnight and mourners in other villages have not yet arrived.

Once the person dies, women relatives gather around the body to wail. They cluster around, often leaning over and touching the body for the last time, and become very emotional, ranting and chanting of their attachment to the person in a stylized fashion.

The body is then prepared, first by washing with water and then by rubbing with gingelly (sesame) oil. *Tulasi* leaves are placed in the mouth

and the body is placed on a bier (*kāṭika*) of bamboo poles covered with bundles of straw. A rice cake of steamed rice is brought in a household rice strainer and placed on the body, and bananas with incense sticks in them are also put next to it. If the deceased is either a young unmarried girl, *bālapēraṇṭālu*, or auspicious wife with her husband still alive, *pēraṇṭālu*, the body is covered with turmeric and a huge *boṭṭu* is placed on her forehead made of a handful of turmeric paste topped with a large vermillion dot. If it is determined that the person died at an inauspicious time, a baby chicken is killed to appease the malevolent planet and avert the person's becoming a ghost. The chicken is also placed on the bier with the body which is covered in a white cloth that leaves only the head exposed.

The cremation (*smaṣānam*) follows, with only men going to the cremation ground. Saying, 'Narayana, Narayana, Narayana,'[28] they raise and lower the bier three times before proceeding with the body pointing head first to the boundary of the settlement led by Barber caste drummers. There they raise and lower the body again and turn it to point feet first. Leading the mourners is the chief mourner who tosses unhulled rice, cotton seeds, and coins over his right shoulder from a winnowing basket. Bystanders scramble to catch the coins—offerings that leave a trail of auspicious generosity and merit, *puṇyam*, in the mourners' path. One mourner carries a fibre frame holding a black ceramic pot that contains the embers to be used to set the pyre alight.

At the cremation ground southeast of Yatapalem, the body is taken to a pyre (*kalapa*) of logs that has been prepared by five or six village Washermen who have been supplied with drinks of country rum to fortify themselves. The body is taken in a circumambulation of the pyre three times in a clockwise direction. The body is then placed on the pyre with its head towards the south (face up if male, face down if female). The white cloth covering it is removed and given to a Washerman. A Washerman also comes and snaps the waist cord of the deceased (the kind of cord first attached at an individual's naming ceremony). All jewelry is removed from the body. The bier is tossed over the pyre to land to the deceased's right.

A mourner breaks three coconuts and pours their milk over the body. Then the chief mourner circumambulates the pyre three times in a clockwise direction. On his right shoulder he carries a black ceramic pot containing water which he sprinkles behind him with a branch of *barnika* leaves that he holds in his left hand. A Washerman with an axe chips a small hole in the pot on each circumambulation until three small sprays of water are spouting out of the pot. He stops at the deceased's head and pours out the remaining water in three lines[29] described from right to left.

The mourners place green leaves on the body (no particular plant is prescribed) and do a final *dandam* salute to the deceased. If a chicken has been brought it is tossed over the body and given to a Washerman along with the banana offering. The chief mourner lights the pyre, and a Washerman breaks the ceramic pot. One of the mourners makes a list of all who attended, for sending them invitations to the funeral meals to follow. While the Washermen stay to tend the pyre, the mourners go to a village tank to bathe.

According to astrologically auspicious timing, usually on the same day as the cremation, the *pinḍākuḍu*—the placing of food offerings—is performed. The mourners return to the site of the pyre, which is now reduced to ashes. Some bones of the deceased are picked out and given to the chief mourner who puts them into a bamboo container for immersing later in the Godavari river. A Washerman gathers a pile of ashes into a rice winnow which the chief mourner carries about two and a half metres and puts them on the ground. He repeats this two more times. Each time he is asked where he is going. Each time he replies with the name of a different holy pilgrimage place, Kashi (Varanasi), Rameshwaram, and Gaya, in that order. A Washerman then digs a hole nearby and fashions a human figure or *bomma* out of the ashes using a knife to fashion legs, arms and a head. This figure is then put into the hole and a triangular mound of earth is formed over it, with points in the southwest, northeast, and northwest directions. In the middle, a dish-like ceramic vessel is placed with three paise in it. A Washerman uses a pole to puncture the middle of the vessel. A mourner plants a tulasi bush in the hole.

The mound is washed with water and a ceramic oil lamp is kindled, bananas are offered, and *sambrāni* incense is lit. Then three banana leaf plates are placed down, one at each of the corners. On them the chief mourner places 'all the foods the deceased ate in his or her life,' including cooked rice, dal, an egg curry, chicken curry, a fish curry, and sweets. (These meals are later taken by the Washermen.) Sometimes a cigar and bottle of country rum are also added. The chief mourner breaks three coconuts, pouring their liquid over the whole area and placing one at each of the plates of food. He then lights five incense sticks, circles *sambrāni* incense three times over the area, and lights five pieces of camphor.

All the people present then beat a quick retreat. They regroup by the roadside at some distance from the cremation ground and quietly, somewhat anxiously wait for a crow to appear, fly down and touch the food offerings (*kāki muṭṭuṭa*, 'to touch or be received by a crow'). This is taken as a sign that the soul of the deceased has come in the form of a crow and accepts the offerings. The mourners emit sighs of pleasure when crows do come. They then pass out *prasādam* such as fried chickpeas,

The next ceremony is the *pedda dinavaram*, also called *pedda karma*, which takes place nine or eleven days after the cremation or according to the astrological almanac. It consists of an afternoon feast given to all those who attended the cremation. The immediate family of the deceased eats at its household shrine. If the deceased was a married man with his wife still alive, then a special ritual of widowing takes place in which her forehead *boṭṭu* is wiped away, her glass bangles are broken, and the cord of her wedding locket is snapped. If the deceased was a woman who died with her husband still alive and his clan is in the *pākrutōḷḷu* funerary sect, then a *muṣānam* ceremony is performed (to be described below).

In the evening, *pākrutoḷḷu* clans have two Jangam priests come to the house of the deceased to perform a ritual that removes death pollution from the family. It is also believed to aid in 'sending the deceased to Siva's heaven', *kailāsam pampincuṭa*. The ceremony takes place in front of the entrance to the house. A special platter made by the Jangams is placed on an area prepared with cowdung water and a *muggu* diagram with a checked pattern. The platter is a wicker tray with a banana leaf on which are placed two rows of six ghee lamps fashioned out of cooked rice flour, a banana with four incense sticks in it, *tulasi* leaves, and light orange coloured *gobbi*[30] flowers. One Jangam rings a loud brass bell with a handle on it as the family Jangam priest chants a tribute in honour of the deceased. The name of the relative sponsoring it is proclaimed and at the end of each tribute he blows a conch shell horn. When all have had tributes said, sometimes thirty or more, the platter is lifted three times by five relatives who have fasted during the day. The Jangam asks them what kind of charity the family will perform in honour of the deceased and one replies *annadānam*, the giving of food. The platter is taken beyond the settlement boundaries and buried in a streambed. *Prasādam* of soaked pulses, *pesara pappu*, is passed out and the Jangams take a money offering of Rs 5.50 and a seer measure of uncooked rice.

Among *cakradārulu* Gavara clans the evening ceremony is conducted by a *pūjāri* known as a Vaishtapodu of the *cāṭāḍi śrīvaiṣṇavulu* caste of Anakapalli. It consists of the offering of twelve leaf plates of food and liquor in honour of the deceased. After having his feet washed by members of the family of the person who died, the *pūjāri* directs the placement of twelve banana leaf plates in the room of the house with its household shrine. Items placed on each plate are raw foods (uncooked rice, green plantain, pumpkin, coconut, yam-like *kanda dumpa*, spinach-like *gongōra* leaf, chillies, tamarind, and salt) and an oil lamp. Other items present in the ritual are a bottle of country rum, *tulasi* leaves and *gobbi* flowers. The *pūjāri* conducts a Brahmanical-style Ganapati *pūja* to a wad of turmeric paste. He then has the chief mourner say a prayer that the

deceased go to Vaikuntham, Vishnu's heaven. The *pūjāri* performs *hārati*, the waving of a lighted piece of camphor, and then has the chief mourner drip water through several items on the offering plates as he chants mantrams. The items are gingelly seeds, *garika* grass (Cynodon Dactylon), and 'three annas' (19 paise). The chief mourner is then told to do a *daṇḍam* to the household shrine. On one occasion, when a young man began crying because his brother had died, the *pūjāri* told him he should try to feel glad so that his brother would also be happy. The ceremony ends with the *pūjāri* blessing the chief mourner and throwing yellow rice on him. The *pūjāri* then takes the foods with him as well as an offering of cloth termed *vastradānam*, the charitable gift of cloth.

Ceremonies to placate the spirit of persons who have died at inauspicious times or who have died untimely deaths can follow the evening rituals performed by Jangams or Vaishtapodu *pūjāris*. These ceremonies are referred to as *śānti*, 'peace', and are performed by specialists in exhorcism. They are discussed later in the description of *ūru kaṭṭaḍam*.

The next stage in the death rituals is called *baṭṭalu peṭṭadam* 'placing of clothing', alternatively referred to as *śānti*, 'peace'. It is usually performed twelve months after the cremation, though it can sometimes be after a shorter period such as five months for an indivdual not of full adult status such as a young child. For adults who have been married, a pererequisite is that their ashes have been immersed in the Godavari or other sacred river. The ceremony consists of a *pūja* performed at the household shrine. Offerings include three wads of turmeric paste each with a vermillion dot, an oil lamp, *tāmbulam* leaves and betel nut, and items of food. Three leaf plates of food are placed in front of the shrine; the family dines off these after the *pūja*. Offerings of clothing are placed at the shrine in the deceased's honour and are later taken to be worn. A feast is given again for all who attended the cremation and the *pedda dinavaram* feast. Subsequent to this installation of the deceased into the household shrine as an ancestor, family members affected by each other's death pollution may resume performing *pūjas*, going to temples, and celebrating weddings. It officially ends the period of mourning and funerary restrictions.

The deceased is next worshipped along with other ancestors at the annual Sankranti festival in mid-January, and also at any other time the household shrine is the site of a *pūja* or when ancestors are honoured at it on the occasion of festivals or other celebrations. Separate Brahmanical death anniversary ceremonies called *piṇḍam iccuṭa*, 'the giving of funerary offerings', are considered optional and are generally considered to be done as part of the Sankranti festival.

The Muṣānam Ritual

This ritual was mentioned above in the discussion of how funerary rituals define statuses and roles. The *muṣānam* is a ritual performed for a woman who has died before her husband, and is thus an auspicious wife, *pēranṭālu*. It is a ritual performed only by members of clans who practise *pākrutoḷḷu* funerary rituals using a Jangam *pūjāri*. Though the ritual is thus performed by only part of the Gavara population, all Gavaras are likely to have participated in or have seen a *muṣānam* ritual since members of the two funerary sects freely intermarry.

In the *muṣānam* ritual, auspicious wives from the family of the husband of the deceased woman go in procession to a tank outside the village carrying twelve pairs of rice winnowing baskets (in sets with one covering the other) plus a thirteenth single one, containing turmeric and other offerings and *pūja* items. Each winnowing basket is smeared with crossed diagonal lines of turmeric forming a large 'X'. At the tank they are met by a similar procession from the family of the deceased woman. The husband's family provides a Jangam woman who is ceremonially seated, bathed, and smeared with turmeric. An immense turmeric wad (like the ones placed on the forehead of the corpse of a *bālapēranṭālu* or *pēranṭālu*) with a large vermillion spot is put on her forehead. Meanwhile an area next to her is prepared (with cowdung and a ritual diagram, *muggu*) and a schematic image (*bomma*) of a person is fashioned on it out of several handfuls of mud from the tank bottom, reminiscent of the forming of a body-like shape out of cremation ashes at the time of the *piṇḍākūḍu* ceremony. Items associated with married status are placed on this mud image, such as turmeric and a miniature wooden container known as a *bariṇi* and used by married women to store vermillion powder (*kumkum*) for their foreheads, glass bangles, toe rings, a string of black beads (representing the cord of the *mangalasūtram*, wedding locket), flowers etc. Then the Jangam woman impersonates the deceased woman as the relatives ask her if she accepts the offerings they have brought her. Three women lift and lower a rice winnow of offerings covered with their sari ends and say, 'if you do not accept it tell us, don't turn into a ghost (*dayam*)'. She acts reluctant at first but finally agrees. Then the mud image, the items on it, other offerings brought in the rice winnows, and the turmeric wad on the forehead of the Jangam woman are removed and taken out and immersed in the tank. The new rice winnows that were used in the ceremony are distributed to the *pēranṭālu* who have attended. Also distributed to the *pēranṭālu* is *prasādam* of fruits and liberal quantities of turmeric and vermillion which they apply to their foreheads in the hope that they will also live their lives without ever becoming widows. All return to the village except for the deceased woman's husband who remains behind at

the tank next to an oil lamp and remnants of the *pūja*. He breaks his waistcord, *multāḍu*, before sadly returning to the village.

A number of aspects of this ritual deserve further consideration. First there is the obvious glorification of the auspicious wifehood of the *pēraṇṭālu*, and association of it with the meritorious (*puṇyamaina*), charitable and virtuous (*dharmamaina*) donations of turmeric and rice winnows. But there is an ambiguous aspect that emerges from notions about ghosts and women. People who die incompleted lives, dying in an unnatural fashion before reaching old age, are believed to come back to interfere vengefully with peoples' lives in the world. And women in particular are believed to have more attachment, *āśa*, to their loved ones and be more emotional and less under control than men. For these reasons, a woman who dies before her husband is believed to be motivated to return as a ghost and cause harm to people, despite her meritorious death as a *pēraṇṭālu*. The performance of the *muṣānam* ritual is thus to appease her vengeful nature by exalting her as a *pēraṇṭālu*. The making of the mud image, transferring her spirit into it, and then harmlessly dissolving it in a tank is a technique encountered in other contexts when malevolent influences such as ghosts and evil eye are cast off. Looked at from another angle, we could say that the performance of the *muṣānam* ritual helps to create the ideology of the attachment and emotionalism of women by mobilizing people into action to deal with it. It almost goes without saying that the ritual also contributes to the creation and maintenance of the concept of auspicious wifehood.

The *muṣānam* ritual has the additional purpose of redefining the relations between the families of the husband and his deceased wife. Through the ritual, the husband is, in effect, released from his marriage vow and free to remarry if he wishes. If he does not perform it, he would not only have difficulties from his wife's vengeful ghost, he might also risk the resentment of his wife's family.

The *muṣānam* is a further example of ritual and symbolism creating the social category and ideology of auspicious womanhood. Earlier we hypothesised that this arose from the need to subordinate women to men in a society in which women exercise considerable influence. What is remarkable is how the symbolism of the auspicious wife is internalised by members of society and women in particular. The concept of the auspicious woman then comes to take on a life of its own in the form of cults centring on the worship of *pēraṇṭālu* and *bālapēraṇṭālu*.

The Bālapēraṇṭālu Cult

While deceased *pēraṇṭālu* and *bālapēraṇṭālu* are associated in terminology and symbolism (particularly turmeric and vermillion), they have

different spheres of influence and importance. *Pēranṭālu* are eventually 'installed' in the household shrine of their husband where separate turmeric and vermillion panels are sometimes placed on the wall to represent them. They are worshipped by family members and are believed to exert benevolent influences over the family's undertakings. For instance, it is not unusual for a Gavara farmer to do a *daṇḍam* gesture at his household shrine specifically with a family *pēranṭālu* in mind before going on a trip to a town for buying or selling.

The *bālapēranṭālu* on the other hand is believed to exert her benevolent influence for everyone in the village and even for people of other villages. In fact there is now a rapid expansion of *bālapēranṭālu* shrines in the vicinity of Aripaka Revenue Village with four well-established ones and one incipient one in Yatapalem alone. Wandering bards, *jamikiloḷḷu*, help to spread the mythology and growing popularity of these quasi-goddesses depicted as pillars with *tulasi* plants or statues of little girls. The popularity of *bālapēranṭālu* temples as sites of pilgrimage is making serious inroads into the income of a local Siva temple. The bards tell stories of *bālapēranṭālu*, deceased young girls, who came into their parents' dreams and requested that temples be built for them. When they were disinterred, their bodies were found not to have decomposed. Strange stones made 'self-manifested' appearances at household shrines, and so forth.

Along the lines of our interpretation of *pēranṭālu*, it can be suggested that *bālapēranṭālu* die incomplete lives and possess a great deal of unfulfilled *āśa*. In contrast with *pēranṭālu*, however, they have not yet sexually matured. Perhaps this is the reason for the more benevolent character attributed to them, less jealousy and vengefulness. Also, because they have not married, they are not seen as threatening any man or his second wife. The auspicious potentiality of an unbetrothed girl seems to correspond with her willingness to exert benevolent influence for any member of society, not merely for members of a single family.

The parents of such miraculous children seem to be people who have recently prospered from jobs in Visakhapatnam Port or in the jaggery trade who are not displeased at being able to gain recognition for themselves through temples to their deceased daughters. But the situation is obviously more complex than this.

What is significant for us here is to note the degree to which the *bālapēranṭālu* further reinforce the category of auspicious womanhood associating it with auspiciousness and well-being. One of the principal areas in which *bālapēranṭālu* demonstrate their powers is in alleviating problems of female concern, particularly barrenness, irregular menstruation, irregular supply of breast milk, and children's illnesses. Some of the most striking symbolic elements in the *bālapēranṭālu* shrines themselves are the allusions to auspi-

cious wifehood in the form of votive offerings of gold wedding lockets and wooden containers of vermillion and turmeric used in forehead decoration.

NOTES

1. Other castes have different practices. For instance, Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis have house shrines but these are not considered to have anything to do with ancestors nor do they have turmeric panels. Velamas' house shrines do not have turmeric panels which they say they use only to represent village goddesses, not deities or ancestors. For the Settigollu, the turmeric patch stands for elders and auspicious women but not gods or village goddesses.

2. Brahman and Raju households in Aripaka often have a four-sided pillar with a *tulasi* plant growing on top that is worshipped by married women to ensure their husbands' longevity.

3. Gavara women and those of all other castes too, go to their own parents' house to give birth to their first child. Among all castes except the Malas and Madigas they do the same for their second child. Subsequent children are born in their husband's house.

4. *Rakṣa*, 'amulet', the word is derived from a term meaning 'protection, saving, or preserving.'

5. The Telugu film industry appears to have played no small part in this trend.

6. A girl who has just begun menstruating for the first time is referred to as *puṣpavati* or *rajasvari*. *Puṣpavati* derives from *puṣpam*, 'flower', while the term *rajasvari* derives from *rajassu* which in addition to meaning 'menses' and 'dust, the pollen of flowers' has the synonym, '*rajōguṇam*' which has meanings associated with *āśa*, 'the condition of humanity, the quality of passion; the earthly nature; the natural man of flesh and blood; the flesh; that which produces sensual desire, worldliness, coveting, and falsehood, the cause of pain' (Brown : 867). *Pedda manisi āyuṭa* literally means 'becoming a big person.'

7. This day is called *toli rōju*, 'first day'.

8. One young man, who married a non-relative from a village beyond Chodavaram in May 1971, received a dowry of Rs. 1,100 from his bride's family. His family gave the bride six tolas of gold said to be worth Rs. 600. One tola, *tulamu*, is equal to somewhat less than half of an ounce, the weight of a silver rupee coin from the days of the British. These figures are not very different from the case of a Gavara uncle-niece marriage in the same month between residents of Yatapalem. The girl's side gave Rs. 1,000 and the boy's gave eight tolas of gold.

9. *Neredu* (called *neridi* by the villagers) is the Java Plum or Jambolana, designated in Latin as *Syzygium cumini* (Linn.) in the family Myrtaceae. It is a large evergreen tree, flowering in the May-June wedding season, whose fruit is edible and whose wood is used for agricultural implements.

10. Trees and branches used for the *pelli rāṭa*, 'wedding pole', are all known to exude milky white sap—*neredu*, *māmmidi*, *barnika*, *cemulu*, and *pāla*.

11. This platform is called a *rāṭa pīnu*, a term similar to the name given to the yantra-like diagram upon which the groom and bride sit during the wedding, the *peṇḍli pīnu*.

12. Their position reverses during the evening's proceedings.

13. The only explanation given for this was that it is the 'custom' or 'rule', *rivaju*.

14. This term is possibly derived from *irasala kaṭṭu*, *irasa* or *irasu*, 'a measure of capacity'; *kaṭṭu*, 'a tie, bond, or knot.' Compare the term *jātikaṭṭu*, 'the tie of kindred, the custom of the caste' (Brown : 200).

15. *Mangala*, 'propitious'; *sūtram*, 'string'.

16. The word *kaṭṇam* means 'fees, dues, gifts, contributions', or 'presents.' In addition to being the term used to describe contributions by relatives and friends at weddings, it is used to refer to the customary fees paid to servant castes for their participation in the ritual.

17. Here is the *kaṭṇam* data for one uncle-niece marriage that took place in May 1971. During the *kaṭṇam* readings, the groom's family donated Rs. 800 as the equivalent of 8 tolas of gold. The bride's family gave a dowry of Rs. 500 in cash and Rs. 500 'for household vessels.' (The bride's father later used that Rs. 1,800 to mortgage half an acre of wet land for his new son-in-law.)

The groom received Rs. 389 in cash and 1 tola of gold in *kaṭṇams* donated by 54 people, of whom 27 were relatives and 27 were other Gavaras. The bride, whose father was a relatively well-to-do farmer with wide economic ties in the village, received Rs. 964 in cash and 1 tola in gold. These were donated by 143 people of whom 42 were relatives, 66 were non-related Gavaras, and 35 were members of other castes. Among the non-related Gavaras were several buyers of milk from near Visakhapatnam who started regular commercial purchases at Yatapalem as a result of the bride's father's invitation, and a man with land adjacent to his. Among the members of other castes were his family barber, oil presser, potter, Velamas who carted his jaggery to Akanapalli, his Mala long-term fieldhands, and a Settigollu and a Washerman who live in his neighbourhood in the village. Among the donors of gold were a close relative living next door and a man who was interested to arrange a marriage between his son and the bride's father's other daughter.

In addition to these *kaṭṇams*, more than half of which were donations of Rs. 5 each, there were gifts of clothing from close relatives, fictive gifts of wedding lockets to the bride by her relatives (not actually meant for her to keep), and joke gifts of two or three paise typically wrapped in nearly endless series of wrappings within wrappings. These humorous gifts to the groom, typically from the bride's younger brothers, are the occasion for much laughter and amusement.

18. If it should pass by another wedding shed, the groom and bride's palanquin is covered with a cloth since it is prohibited for them to view it.

19. *Maṅgaḷam*, 'happiness, good fortune, well-being, welfare, prosperity' (Brown : 760).

20. The link between eating together and having sex together is explicit for villagers who use the euphemism 'to eat with someone' to mean 'have sex with them'.

21. Exhibiting a similar pattern, castes which acknowledge their inferiority to Gavaras incorporate as part of their wedding rituals symbolic acts of tribute known as *iḍumulu*. These explicitly acknowledge ideal caste categories and hierarchical political and economic structures.

On the night of the wedding of a Washerman in Kottapalem, a delegation of Washermen went to the Settigollu headman (*naiḍu*) of Kottapalem. He then went with them to Yatapalem in a ceremonial procession accompanied by Barber, Jangam, and Madiga drummers each with the distinctive drums of his caste. In Yatapalem he presented symbolic tribute (on the Washermen's behalf) in the form of gifts of betal leaves and areca nut. Each gift consisted of two betel leaves, two pieces of areca nut, a five paise coin, and a banana. The first presentation was made to the god Rama in the

village temple. It was received by the son of the temple *pūjāri*, a Jangam, who gave back some *prasādam* in return. The next presentation was to the Headman, and the third was to the family of the Headman's father's predecessor (i.e. the current Headman's father's elder brother).

This ceremony expressed the subordination of Kottapalam Washermen to the political leader of their settlement, a Settigollu. This Settigollu leader in turn expressed his allegiance and subservience to Yatapalem, recognizing it as the religiously and politically superior village. In these acts a direct association was being made between the tribute of obeisance offered to the god Rama and that offered to the Gavara Headman of Yatapalem. Both acts were for the ostensible purpose of securing blessing and well-being through the symbolic ackowledgement of subordination. A further noteworthy feature of the tributes was the way they acknowledged the line of hereditary succession in the village headmanship, extending as far back as the descendents of the current headman's uncle.

A second occurrence of this pattern of tribute by subordinate castes was observed in the symbolic leave-taking by a Yatapalem Washerman who had just been married and was about to depart for his wife's village (in the *yānālu*, series of journeys and meal giving alternating between the groom's and bride's villages). In this case, the form of tribute was less an acknowledgement of political than that of economic ties of subservience. The groom, bride, and the groom's family went around Yatapalem 'taking leave' of 'big people', *peddōḷḷu*. They first went to offer a *daṇḍam* salute at the village Rama temple and presented its Jangam *pūjāri* with a rupee donation. They then took leave of some nine prominent Gavara elders. (There was no prescribed number.) In each case, first the groom and then the bride touched the feet of the man (or his wife if he was absent). These people then each presented the groom with a gift of a rupee and a blessing. Having completed this, the Washermen returned to their house where the groom and bride touched and saluted the feet of the groom's father.

Among the nine people chosen by the Washermen for tribute were the village Headman, the village Panchayat Vice President, and his brother who had temporarily served as provisional headman. The single feature which all had in common was that they were all serviced by that Washerman family. Altogether that family served some forty-three individual households. Of those, they had selected the most economically prominent households. Some of these, consequently, were also politically prominent figures as well. Just as the previously described ceremony of tribute paying had defined an ideal depiction of hierarchy in the political structure of the village and its settlements, this leave-taking had been an idealised hierarchical phrasing of economic relations (a *jajmāni* model). While not enough data are available to say with certainty which other service castes perform these symbolic tributes (it was observed among Settigollu in another village), it is not surprising that it is unquestionably linked with Washermen, who, we have noted, maintain the most widespread long-term (*jajmāni*-like) economic relations with other castes.

22. In this analogy the two ceramic pots could be seen as the groom and bride while the brass pot behind them is the auspicious wife who accompanies them.

23. Southwest is the opposite direction from the auspicious northeast, *isānyamūla*, the corner of the household shrine.

24. Called *musi vāyanam*, 'covered offering' by Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis.

25. A dead wife is said 'to have *āśa* on her turmeric *boṭṭu*.'

26. *Viḍudala* 'divorce', literally means 'release' in a legal sense.

27. *Taguluṭa* 'strike', 'hit', or 'inflict' as with a wound; the same verb is used for astrological influences.

28. *Nārāyaṇa* is a name of Lord Vishnu.

29. The drawing of such lines is a feature of exorcisms and is intended to seal off the path from the dead person's ghost.

30. *Gobbi* is probably the plant designated in Latin as *Asteracantha longifolia* (Linn.).

CHAPTER 5

CALENDRICAL RITUALS: THE VILLAGE GODDESS FESTIVAL

SEASONAL CHANGES, AGRICULTURAL RHYTHMS, AND FESTIVAL MOODS

Annual cycle rituals are reckoned by the Telugu Hindu calendar. As mentioned earlier, this is primarily a calendar of twelve lunar months each divided into a waxing and a waning fortnight. Solar-based principles of reckoning primarily concern the division of the year into auspicious and less auspicious halves (*uttarāyanam*, *dakṣiṇāyanam*) as well as into twenty-seven periods of approximately thirteen and a half days each, known as *kārte*. These *kārte* are based on the apparent transit of the Sun through various constellations, *nakṣatram*. It would be merely a pedantic exercise to cite these astrological details if we were to lose sight of the overall rhythm of the seasons and agriculture for which calendrical reckoning serves as a convenient calibration.

The Telugu year begins at the vernal equinox which is towards the beginning of the hot season (*yeṇḍa kālam*) during which there is neither rain nor agricultural activity. The glaring heat perceptibly increases in intensity week by week to more than 40°C, until by May and the first half of June all midday activity ceases. This oppressive heat suddenly and dramatically breaks in mid-June with the arrival of the Monsoon rains. Immediately, intensive agricultural activities begin—ploughing, planting, and irrigation. In July, as the rainy season (*vārṣa kālam*) continues, millet and rice are transplanted. Sugar-cane is harvested, crushed, and boiled down into jaggery in October and November. The main grain harvests are brought in after the rains have ceased, around the end of November and the beginning of December. The heat abates and the cool dry season (*calli kālam*) sets in. Midday maximum temperatures gradually drop from 35°C to 30°C, reaching the coolest level of about 22°C. Thresh-

TABLE 28—THE ANNUAL RITUAL CYCLE

Lunar Month		*Season*	*Agricultural operations*	*Agricultural rituals*	*Annual cycle rituals*		*Private calendrical observances*
					Major festivals	*Other holidays*	
	1971						
CAITRA	27 Mar.-25 Apr.	HOT SEASON				Kotta Amavasya Ugadi Sri Rama Navami	
VAISAKHA	26 Apr.-24 May			Rain-Bringing Rituals	BANDAMMA		Wedding Season
JYESTHA	25 May-22 June		Ploughing				
ASADHA	23 June-22 July		Sowing	First Sowing			Simhachalam Yatra
		RAINY SEASON	Millet Transplant		MARIDAMMA		
SRAVANA	23 July-20 Aug.		Rice Transplant	First Transplant		Krsna Astami	
BHADRAPADA	21 Aug.-19 Sep.			Field Sacrifices		Vinayaka Caviti	Musalatalli
ASVAYUJA	20 Sep.-19 Oct.		Cane Harvest			Dipavali Amavasya	
KARTIKA	20 Oct.-17 Nov.			First Jaggery Making	GAIRAMMA	Nagula Caviti Kartika-Siva's Month Monday Puja	Kartika purnimi-Moon *Pūja*
			Millet Harvest				
MARGASIRA	18 Nov.-17 Dec.	COOL SEASON	Rice Harvest	First Rice Harvest		Dhanu-Visnu's Month Saturday Puja	Bangaramma/ Durgalamma
PUSYA	1972 18 Dec.-15 Jan.		Threshing	First Rice cooking	SANKRANTI		Mahalaksmi Devata
MAGHA	16 Jan.-14 Feb.		Vegetables			Season of Fairs	Ratha Saptami-Sun *Pūja*
PHALGUNA	15 Feb.-15 Mar.					Mahasivaratri	Venkatesvara *Pūja*

ing and winnowing is begun as secondary garden vegetable plots are planted with such crops as aubergines, onions, chillies, ladies fingers, and tobacco. After these are harvested in January, a slack period in agricultural activity begins and continues on into the hot season.

THE MAJOR ANNUAL FESTIVALS

The agricultural and seasonal cycle has a great effect on the mood and tempo of village life and finds expression in the annual cycle of calendrical rituals. Major festivals which mobilise participation by the broadest range of the population focus on these important seasonal changes. Of all the festivals, the village goddess festivals (*grāma dēvata panḍugalu*) have the widest degree of inter-caste and inter-settlement participation. Two village goddess festivals are conducted every year in the hot season after the Telugu New Year, *ugādi*, in March. The somewhat threatening, coercive side of these deities appears to draw from the general mood of anxiety associated with the hot season when the lands are parched and the water level in the wells sinks low. Since overheating of the body is one of the main explanations for the causation of fevers and illness, as the seasonal temperatures rise, fears of disease increase. This lends further impetus to the joint endeavour to appease village goddesses who cause as well as prevent illness.

The second major festival season is in honour of Gairamma, Siva's consort Gauri, and is celebrated in October-November. This is a festival with associations of fecundity and fertility coinciding with the period in which the crops are ripening. The potentially threatening aspect of the village goddesses is noticeably absent from Gairamma who is looked upon with affection and happiness, reflecting the expectant satisfaction with the ripening crops.

The third major spate of festival activity, culminating in Sankranti, comes after the harvest is in. It is a season of fairs and celebrations, an expression of the villagers' high-spirited enjoyment of the completion of the harvest.

These rituals, which mobilise a high degree of inter-caste cooperation, serve to dramatise symbols of hierarchy. They breathe life and reality into the concept that well-being derives from maintaining social relationships which are phrased in a hierarchical idiom. In varying degrees, they also give actuality to the converse principle that illness and misfortune threaten those who fail to maintain such ties or neglect to behave deferentially to superiors.

We shall now examine these rituals in detail for their symbolic content

and examine how they propound and instil an ideology of hierarchy and interdependence.

THE VILLAGE GODDESS FESTIVAL

The celebration of the village goddess festival is the occasion for the widest joint participation by all the settlements associated together as the revenue village of Aripaka in a single ritual event. Each year there are two such festivals, an annual one to Bandamma and the other to one of three sets of village goddesses whose festivals rotate in a triennial cycle (*Mariḍamma, Rāvalamma, Bangāramma/Dūrgālamma*). Thus, one year there are festivals to Bandamma and Maridamma; the next year to Bandamma and Ravalamma, and the third year to Bandamma and Bangaramma/Durgalamma (two goddesses whose temples are side by side and whose festivals are conducted simultaneously). In all of these festivals, Yatapalem is the centre of activity and the Gavaras provide the main financial support.

Since village goddesses are different for each village, there is no synchronization with similar festivals in other villages, apart from the season in general. In fact, the unique timing appears designed to emphasize this feature of village distinctiveness. Nevertheless, goddess festivals cluster in the same general period following the Telugu New Year, at the beginning of the lunar month of Caitra. For Aripaka Revenue Village, the Bandamma festival, always the first of the two goddess festivals, is initiated about a week after *Srī Rāma Navami* which falls nine days after the Telugu New Year. This reckoning is not rigid and numerous factors can intervene to push the time forward, such as the importance of the festival falling on a Sunday (the special day of Bandamma) or the necessity of avoiding *caviti*, the inauspicious fourth lunar day. The second goddess festival usually follows several weeks after Bandamma.

Structure of the Festival

The overall structure of the festival is based on the concept that the goddess is invited into the village for a week. There are activities in her honour every evening leading up to the penultimate day. On that evening there is a particularly lively procession followed by a vigil into the night until about four o'clock in the morning when a special rice offering is collected from the village households and taken out to the goddess' temple to appease ghosts that hover there. The last day of the festival consists of a procession of the entire village accompanying a wooden idol of the goddess and pots of rice offerings. This procession goes to do *pūja* to her in her temple, where a goat is sacrificed on behalf of the entire village. People return home for festival meals, and an all-night-long

operatic drama staged by the young men of the village follows.

Apart from the model of hospitality to a visiting dignitary, there is another process expressed in the festival. The goddess takes different forms as she is progressively tamed. At the beginning of the festival, she resides in an anthill, a wild natural place associated with dangerous snakes. She is then transferred to ritual pots into which tribute offerings are placed. For the final procession she takes the form of a wooden idol which is escorted to her permanent temple building. There, in the presence of her carved stone statue, a sacrifice is made and she is appeased for the following year.

The following is a step by step outline of the Bandamma festival in detail:

Two or three days before the festival is to begin, the Village Servant (whose Telugu title is *bārki*), an Aripaka Mala, goes around all the settlements of the village. He drums and announces the day on which the Gavara elders have decided that the festival will begin. This announcement is official and binding. In one instance in another village a Village Servant announced that a festival would be to a particular goddess. He mistakenly said the name of the wrong goddess whose festival then had to be carried out instead of the one originally intended for fear of offending her.

On the first day of the festival a *pūja* is done by the Vadram *pūjāri* at a termite mound outside Yatapalem. He cleanses the area with cowdung water, draws a *muggu* design in rice powder, places on it three turmeric wads with vermillion dots on them, lights an oil lamp, puts down a leaf plate of food, and wafts incense smoke over the area. Three bits of dirt from the termite mound are placed in the Vadram's special shallow basket, *dāngari*. The Village Servant eats the food offered in the *pūja*. He returns to the village and throws the dirt from the termite mound on to the roof of the Vadram's hut. He enters his house and does a *pūja* to two brass *ghaṭṭam* pots—like the kind of vessel used in fetching well water—saluting them with *daṇḍam* hand gestures and wafting incense onto them.

He brings the *ghaṭṭam* pots out of the house to begin the first evening's procession. The pots are decorated with an undercoating of white-wash and a yellow strip of turmeric around their middle. The top half of each pot above this turmeric band is covered with vermillion dots. Sitting on top of each brass *ghaṭṭam* pot is a smaller black clay pot known as a *dāka*.

Starting at the house of the Vadram goddess *pūjāri*, the *ghaṭṭam* pots are taken in procession around Yatapalem. The procession moves through the main streets of the settlement and collects offerings of raw and cooked

rice from women of individual households. The procession is led by Madiga drummers accompanied by the Village Servant. The Vadram and a Washerman take turns carrying the *ghaṭṭam* pots on their heads. A Barber follows with an umbrella made of palm leaves, around the rim of which are hung five small bunches of neem leaves. Another Barber carries a censer in the form of a broken potshard containing embers on to which he periodically sprinkles pinches of powdered incense, *guggilam*.[1] A Washerman accompanies them holding a flaming torch and oil container to keep its fire fed. This is kept burning even in daytime as its function, like the umbrella, is the ceremonial one of showing respect and giving honour to the goddess. In addition, it is the duty of these castes to carry these objects in procession as part of their official participation in the festival.

When the procession has completed its round of the village, the *ghaṭṭam* pots are placed to rest on a special *muggu* diagram which is prepared in the following way. An area on the platform in front of the old Yatapalem Rama temple is washed with water by a Settigollu woman. She draws an auspicious diagram in rice powder and places two handfuls of raw rice down on the ground on to the diagram. When the procession arrives, it circumambulates the area three times clockwise. The *ghaṭṭam* pots are placed down on to the small piles of rice. This honours them by not placing them directly on to the ground. An oil lamp is lit in the clay pot that sits on the top of each of the *ghaṭṭam* pots. The Vadram *pūjāri* performs a *pūja* to the pots by waving the censer over them three times clockwise and placing it down on a bunch of neem leaves. He then does a *daṇḍam* gesture three times, each time touching the pots before placing his hands together. The umbrella is then placed down between the pots and the Washerman holding the torch sits down nearby.

There immediately begins a series of satirical skits, *vālakālu*,[2] improvised by Gavaras. They are not omitted from the first night's proceedings even if these are sparsely attended since they are intended for the entertainment of the goddess as well as the villagers. They are begun always in the same way. A man or boy goes around in a circle counter-clockwise holding a burnt or smouldering palmyra palm leaf behind him while exclaiming *abbōr abbōr* as if his 'tail' is on fire. The skits frequently return to this convention of pacing around in a circle to represent people walking from one place to another, a farmer ploughing, etc.

The skits are usually about villagers and incidents which have recently taken place. The plots of the skits frequently employ inversions of hierarchy and reversals of 'normal' behaviour. Recurrent themes are: men who are subordinate to women (such as husbands to wives) or impotent, women who are widely known to have illicit liaisons, and ser-

vants who dominate their masters. In the slapstick antics, reversals of the symbolism of hierarchy are a constant feature. Men who touch the feet of women (i.e. women impersonated by men), and 'women' who kick people and immodestly lift up their saris never fail to evoke howls of laughter.

After the skits are over, the *ghaṭṭam* pots are taken back in procession to the house of the Vadram *pūjāri*. There, the cooked rice donations are doled out as payments in kind to the participants in the procession. It is distributed in roughly hierarchical order, to Barbers and Washermen, then to the Aripaka Mala Village Servant, and lastly to the seven or eight Madiga drummers. The uncooked rice donations are kept by the Vadram himself.

The same procedures are followed for the next five days. There is an evening procession with the *ghaṭṭam* pots followed by skits or other entertainment in front of the pots. Afterwards, the evening's donations are divided among the procession participants.

On the penultimate day of the festival, known as *tolēlu*[3], relatives of the villagers begin to arrive. That evening, the procession with the *ghaṭṭam* pots is particularly enthusiastic and many villagers participate in the dancing or stick-twirling (*sāmu*) displays. Two *ghaṭṭam* pots are taken to Aripaka to be circulated for offerings. The pots then go to Kottapalem via Mallolla Pakalu. They have to wait by a tank at the entrance to Yatapalem until the Yatapalem pots have completed their rounds in the village. Then a group of Madiga drummers come out to escort them back into Yatapalem.

The four *ghaṭṭam* pots of rice offerings, two from Yatapalem and two from Aripaka/Kottapalem (each pair containing one pot with cooked and one pot with uncooked rice) are placed down together on the specially prepared area near the Rama temple as on the previous evenings. A series of skits is then performed. In time, the crowd dwindles from several hundred to thirty or so and the skits gradually lose momentum. Ultimately only a token number of villagers actually stay up all night in honour of the goddess. In festivals when some form of entertainment is provided such as a wandering bard or drama troupe, a larger group of people is likely to maintain the vigil.

A village Carpenter brings a wooden frame (approximately 50 cm × 75 cm) with four wheels (20 cm in diameter) to the Village Servant who proceeds to smear it with turmeric and red parallel lines. He secures a basket (*ujiḍi*) on to the wheeled frame (*baṇḍi*, 'vehicle' or 'cart'). At around four o'clock in the morning the drums begin beating and the Village Servant takes off hastily through the village pulling the *ujiḍi baṇḍi* by a rope. He shouts, "hoy, the *ujiḍi baṇḍi* is coming." As he and

the drummers pass by, women put cooked rice offerings, contained in rice strainers into the basket of the small cart. The Village Servant makes one circle through the main streets and then goes out of the village without stopping. He is in a frantic rush to take the rice offerings to the temple of Bandamma. There, he and the drummers circumambulate the temple three times and abandon the *ujiḍi banḍi*. Their purpose is to appease the ghosts (*bhūtam*) which hover around there which might otherwise intervene and snatch the offerings made on the next day to Bandamma. Their mission out to the temple in the middle of the night is considered to be highly perilous. The Vadram and others at the temple wait expectantly for the return of the Village Servant, the Washerman with the torch, and a Mala and Madiga drummer. When they finally return, the offerings in the *ghaṭṭam* pots from the evening procession are distributed to the procession participants. This never occurs without some argument between them over how much of a share each is entitled to.

The morning that follows starts the festival's final day known as *anupu*.[4] Between 40 and 50 households perform fulfilments of private vows they have made during the year. The vows mainly concern the curing of illnesses or barrenness. The vows are fulfilled by the performance of *pūja* at the goddess' temple which include the offering of turmeric and vermillion, incense, food, new clothing, chicken sacrifices, fire walking, and *danḍam* gestures.

There is also house to house begging. The Vadram *pujāri* goes around giving forehead marks (*boṭṭu* or *tilakam*) with turmeric-stained rice grains from a neem-leaf decorated basket on his head. The basket is the one he uses to bring the termite mound dirt from the goddess' abode to bring her into the village for the festival. He exhorts the goddess to stay 'cool' (i.e. calm and satisfied), addressing her as *talli*, 'mother'. Others who go around begging are Gavaras, masquerading as wandering minstrels 'for fun' (*saradāki*). One fun-loving Weaver masquerades, too. One year he imitated a holy man, using a snail-shell necklace to represent prayer beads. The Panchayat Vice-President also circulates, collecting the household levy (*canda*) for the festival expenses, keeping a list of donors and defaulters in a notebook.

This is a day when relatives visit and when people living and working away from the village return to see their family and friends. Women who have married out of the village come back, and women who married in are visited by relatives from their natal villages. The visitors are feted with special holiday foods and sweets. People exchange food with relatives and also non-relatives with whom they maintain ties of friendship. It is impossible for a man or woman to walk down a village street without being urged to enter houses of his or her friends to be presented with

festival confections.

In the afternoon there is another procession with the goddess' *ghaṭṭam* pots. It starts at the house of the Vadram *pūjāri*. One pot is sent to Aripaka and Kottapalem, where rice offerings are collected. Women also do *pūja* to the pots by applying wads of turmeric with a vermillion dot in the middle. At the beginning of the pot procession in Yatapalem, the women of farmer, service, and Harijan caste households (with the exception of those with restrictions due to birth, menstrual, or death pollution) do a *pūja* in honour of the goddess at their household shrine.

A special procession of Gavara elders goes with the Yatapalem pot to the Carpenter quarter to collect the wooden idols (*patimalu*) carved by the Carpenters from neem wood supplied to them by the Panchayat President. These wooden dolls consist of four carvings, one representing the goddess, another her younger brother *Pōturāju*, and two miniature seating stools (*pīṭa*) to go with them.

The carvings are first worshipped at the household shrine of the Carpenter who has carved them. During this *pūja* he smears them with turmeric and vermillion. Then they are brought outside to the accompaniment of drumming and placed on a cloth-covered bed. (The cloth-covering is a mark of respect.) They are wrapped in a white cloth and then taken away on the head of the Vadram *pūjāri*.

The procession continues down the main street of the village, halting periodically for the Madigas to heat their drums over fires of burning palm leaves to keep them taut. By this time the crowd of villagers swells to huge proportions. Amidst rising excitement, furious drumming, and spectacular fireworks explosions, the procession sets out for the Bandamma temple. The temple is located at the northern end of an irrigation dam[5] which lies between Yatapalem and Aripaka.

The procession is led by the various participants with special ritual jobs: drumming, carrying the *ghaṭṭam* pots, the umbrella decorated with sprigs of neem, the censer, the bundle of wooden idols, the sacrificial goat, and the knife used to kill it. The sacrificial goat is donated by the Golla shepherds of neighbouring Rayapuram Agraharam village as a token payment for being allowed to graze their goats on Aripaka Revenue Village wastelands during the year. The sacrificial goat, *paṭṭa pōtu*, which has a large turmeric and vermillion spot on its forehead and a branch of neem hanging around its neck, is led by the Village Servant. The sacrificial knife is smeared with three parallel vermillion lines and has a banana stuck on top to deflect the interest of greedy ghosts hovering about.

As it gets dark the fireworks and crackers intensify. The accelerating tempo is stirred up by the constant rhythmic drumming. A crowd of

people accompanying the Aripaka pot surges forward to meet the Yatapalem crowds. Among them is a Kottapalem Washerman who is customarily possessed by the goddess at this time. It takes several men to hold him down as he thrashes and leaps. His body is smeared with turmeric and he holds branches of neem leaves. Periodically, pots of water are poured over him and incense is fanned into his face 'to cool him'.

The crowd moves to the Bandamma temple which is circumambulated by the drummers, pots, and *pūjāri* who carries the idols on his head. Simultaneously, four or five people begin walking through troughs of embers to fulfil vows to the goddess. Fireworks spray the crowd which runs chaotically in different directions. Loud explosions go off and further contribute to the atmosphere of frenzy and danger. Sporadic, uncontrolled fights sometimes break out over trivial matters of procedure, symptomatic of the intensity of emotion.

Inside the temple, which has only enough room for about four or five people hunched over, the *pūjāri* and a Gavara elder of the Saragadam clan conduct the *pūja*. They place the *ghaṭṭam* pots and wooden idols next to the rough-hewn image of the goddess and apply large wads of turmeric and vermillion (*boṭṭu*) to them. Some of the *boṭṭu* applied to the *ghaṭṭam* pots during the procession in the village are removed and placed on the statue of the goddess. The men light oil lamps, waft incense from a censer, and do *daṇḍam* gestures.

Outside the temple, a Rapeti man who always performs these sacrifices lifts the sacrificial goat three times in a *daṇḍam* gesture towards the goddess. The Village Servant does the same, as Gavara men position themselves in front of the temple holding poles. The drums continue relentlessly through the proceedings. At the moment of decapitating the goat, the Gavara men wave the sticks wildly in the air and beat them together while letting out a high-pitched, blood-curdling howl of "woooo, woooo, woooo" to frighten off hovering demons (*dayam*, *bhūtam*) which would otherwise snatch the offering for themselves. The goat's head and a shallow bowl of its blood are placed in front of the goddess in her temple.

The moment the sacrifice takes place and the howling begins, the drums stop and the villagers flee the area around the temple out of fear of the ghosts who are attracted by the blood offerings. Once they are away from the temple there is a mood of release following the constantly rising emotional tension and frenzy. This peacefulness is emphasised by the sudden absence of drumming. Villagers return home in a relaxed manner for a festival meal. This is usually a meat meal made from a chicken sacrificed by the household to the goddess in the morning.

Several hours after the meal, the all-night-long operatic drama starts

in the square in front of the Rama temple. A harmonium player, a dancing girl, and the costumes are hired from Anakapalli. They assist the other singers and players who are almost exclusively villagers. Prominent roles in the drama are acted by Gavaras and a few Carpenters, but Komati merchants from Aripaka also participate. Near the stage, Komatis and Gavaras set up stalls to sell tea and tobacco. These assist the spectators to remain awake through the night.

The beginning of the play is marked by invocations to Ganapati and various other gods to ensure the successful, unhindered completion of the performance. The *pūja* takes the form of breaking a coconut on the stage platform and singing a hymn while one member of the cast holds a plate with a flaming piece of camphor (*hārati*) to which *daṇḍam* gestures are made. During the intervals or breaks for comic relief, tribute money is sent up to the actors, usually by relatives and friends. If the singing is by a well-known singer or someone who sings with particular virtuosity, others may also send money in tribute. The Komati announcer pays tribute to the actor honoured in this way and returns a formula of praise and blessing for the person and family of the donor. Sometimes when such tributes are announced the amount stated is double the actual amount given. By this means the announcer rewards the donor with flattery, a purposeful exaggeration of his generosity. When the play ends there is an official closing ritual, *mangaḷahārati*, in which another camphor flame is lit and a *mangaḷam* song is sung.

The Symbolisation of Hierarchy in the Bandamma Festival

We now turn to consider various symbolic aspects of the Bandamma festival in greater detail. First we examine how the festival endorses symbols of hierarchy by portraying the hierarchical phrasing of respect behaviour as the most efficacious means of achieving well-being. We then look at the phenomenon of the use of euphemism and the avoidance of certain terminology. We interpret such expressions of flattery and payment of verbal tribute as a strategy for dealing with social situations as well as goddesses. Polite omission to utter 'unmentionables' is behaviour of respect. Analogous to *pūja*, it is a kind of offering which entails an obligation for the party so honoured to reciprocate by bestowing some benefit or protection.

The next aspect of the festival we examine is the improvised skits and formal dramas. We interpret these as a means by which the rituals deal with some of the contradictions which are inherent features of the society. While the skits re-enact some of the structural strains on individuals and then 'defuse' them by laughing at them, the operatic dramas elevate predicaments of conflicting loyalties to lessons in morality which con-

demn pride, endorse truthfulness, and reaffirm interpersonal obligations.

At the same time, the skits and drama are metaphors for relationships with the deity which change during the festival. The goddess who is not fully obligated to men at the start of the festival is as potentially threatening as the destructive tendencies of anti-social behaviour. The goddess obligated to the village at the end of the festival is likened to the characters in the drama who subordinate themselves to the laws of morality and social responsibility.

Finally, we consider the way in which the festival is an opportunity for the Gavaras to assert themselves as the dominant caste of the village. In this regard, the major economic support, exercise of authority and predominant participation is provided by Gavaras. The position of the Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis is peripheral rather than subordinate.

Repetition of Basic Symbolic Elements

A striking feature of the symbolisation of hierarchy in the Bandamma festival is the repetition of basic elements which are encountered in other rituals. The most important is *pūja*, in which turmeric and vermillion form only one component. *Pūja*, the offering of symbolic respect through emphasising hierarchical subordination, occurs at all levels of activity in the festival. *Pūja* is done to the *ghaṭṭam* pots representing the goddess, it is done to the *ujiḍi banḍi*, to the sacrificial goat, and at individual household shrines in honour of the goddess.

The repetition of individual elements in different contexts, such as smearing objects with turmeric and vermillion (e.g. putting *boṭṭus* on them) or cleaning an area by applying a *muggu* design in rice powder on a washed surface, strengthens these symbols and enhances their emotive powers. Within this single festival, turmeric and vermillion appear in the following contexts of veneration and respect: on the termite mound abode of the goddess at the initiation of the festival, on the *ghaṭṭam* pots, on the *ujiḍi banḍi*, on the wooden idols (*patimalu*), in the *pūja* inside the goddess' temple, at the corners of the votive firewalking pits, on the forehead of the sacrificial goat, and in *pūja* at the god corner of individual household shrines.

Another prominent symbolic element is the repetition of the number three, either as a number of items offered (three leaf plates, three turmeric-vermillion dots, three parallel vermillion lines) or as sequences of action (three circumambulations of the temple or of the *muggu* diagram on which the *ghaṭṭam* pots are placed before the skits, three repetitions of holding up the sacrificial goat, etc.). This repetition of a series of three, like the use of turmeric and vermillion, serves to create a feeling of consistency or correspondence with other ritual contexts—such as wed-

dings or funerals—which reinforces the aura of the auspiciousness and efficacy of the rituals.

Four prominent symbols are linked to the worship of village goddesses which are not so closely associated with other rituals. These are the *ghaṭṭam* pots, the wooden idols (*patimalu*), the *ujiḍi banḍi* basket cart, and the use of neem leaves. On closer examination, however, we find that even these have links with other ritual contexts.

The decoration of the goddess pots alludes to auspicious female status. The pots are painted white, have a turmeric stripe around the middle and are covered above this with numerous red dots. These dots are each referred to as *boṭṭu*, the same term used for women's auspicious forehead markings. When women do *pūja* to these pots being brought around the village in procession, they affix wads of turmeric paste, each with a red dot in the centre, on the upper portion of the pot. This is analogous to the application of forehead marks on to an auspicious wife.

That the pot represents a female figure is suggested by the style of decoration observed in *grāma dēvata* festivals in other locations, such as Anakapalli and Vizianagaram, where a cloth resembling a skirt is placed over the body of the pot. This pot is made of brass, has a stand-like concave foot, and a small sphere in what would be the mouth of the pot. This sphere is pointed at the top and resembles a hulled coconut in shape.[6] In one example, a five-headed cobra is depicted arching over this sphere. In another, the sphere is replaced by a three-tiered silver umbrella.

As we have seen, brass *ghaṭṭam* pots are also encountered in numerous contexts in wedding ceremonies. They are given as part of the bride's dowry, and used in ceremonial processions to fetch water for bathing the bride and groom, and in the ceremony of removing the head and wrist strings (*bāsikam*, *kankanam*). In non-festival settings the same variety of pot is the main utensil used by women for carrying water and cooking food. The phenomenon of the ritual use of domestic utensils has already been noted in the case of grindstones.

In addition to the hoped-for positive side of the goddess' character associated with the *ghaṭṭam*, the ambiguity of her character is alluded to by the small *dāka* pot which is placed on top of it. This small black clay pot is used in the goddess festival to hold an oil lamp. The same variety of vessel, known as a *dayam dāka*, ghost pot, is used in exorcisms. Offering of foods which ghosts are believed to like are left under trees where they hover outside the village boundaries. The fact that the *dāka* is used in offerings to Bandamma is an indicator that offerings to her are appeasements and that her real nature is dangerous.

The *patima* idols represent the goddess Bandamma and her younger brother, Poturaju. They form a link in the sequence of progressive repre-

sentations of the goddess from ant hill dirt to pots, and later, the fixed stone at her permanent temple.

The carrying of the idols to the goddess' temple bears a resemblance to other processions of deity images, such as the papier mâché idol of Gairamma in the Gairamma festival to be discussed later. Processions of temple idols are also prominent features of Brahmanical temples (e.g. of Rama, Venkatesvara, Jagannatha) which are well known to the villagers.[7]

The *patima* carving of the goddess is crudely stylized with a square head with distinct eyes, nose, and mouth, a bifurcated diamond-shaped body on a rectangular base. The carving of the goddess' younger brother, Poturaju is clearly phallic, a cylindrical pole with a raised ridge just below a pointed knob at the top. The overt use of a phallic form to represent the male figure suggests that the bifurcated diamond-shaped body of the female figure is similarly an allusion to the female genitals. This occurrence of sexual imagery in deity idols is not an isolated phenomenon. It occurs in the common representation of Siva as a *lingam* in a base representing a *yoni*. One is reminded of Turner's theory that the physiological pole of reference in symbols harnesses their emotive power to reinforce moral ideas (Turner 1968: 18-19).

Certain aspects of the *patimalu* need further clarification. Why is it that a male figure features in this festival to a female goddess and why is this figure her younger brother rather than her husband? One explanation which a carpenter gave of the two wooden statues was that one represented women (*āḍavāḷḷu*) and the other, men (*mogavāḷḷu*). In this regard, it is interesting to note the sexual connotations of the name *pōturāju*. The term *pōtu* occurs widely as an indicator of maleness in the sense of 'male of the species' in words for animals, birds, insects, plants (Galletti 1935: 284), and people. For example, it plays a role like 'tom' and 'billy' in the English words for male cats and goats, tom-cat and billy-goat (*pilli*—'cat', *pōtupilli*—'tom-cat'; *mēka*—'goat', *mēkapōtu*—'billy-goat'). The male water buffalo, significant as an animal formerly sacrificed to *grāma dēvatas*, also has *pōtu* in its name, *dunnapōtu* (*dunna*, 'ploughing'). In Aripaka village speech, contrasting terms for male and female people were *āḍamaniṣi*/*pōtumaniṣi* (*āḍa*—'female', *maniṣi*—'person'). The word *rāju*, which forms the second component of Poturaju's name, literally means 'king'. It is a caste indicator at the end of male names of members of the Raju caste, the local Kshatriyas. It is also commonly appended to male personal names among many castes, including the Gavaras, e.g. Appala Raju, Jogi Raju, much like the words Rao and Naidu which served as titles of rulers but are also ordinary popular names, e.g. Rama Rao, Durgu Naidu.

The juxtaposition of an idol of the goddess with that of her younger

brother appears to represent a sexual symmetry, though not a procreative one. The relationship of younger brother (*tammuḍu*) to elder sister (*akka*) is one in which the superior female protects the inferior male. In the local marriage customs, which allow and even encourage uncle-niece marriage (both actual and classificatory), an elder sister can become a mother-in-law. The ambiguity in the goddess' character, sometimes protective but also potentially in a position to interfere disruptively, fits well with this image of a male's relationship to his elder sister, a mother-like potential mother-in-law.

The *ujiḍi banḍi* seems unique to the goddess festivals though it is used for both Bandamma and Maridamma. However, for Ravalamma it is replaced by other activities which the villagers said performed the same functions. In the Ravalamma festival, in place of sending an *ujiḍi banḍi* on the night preceding the last day, there is a special series of ritual enactments. These are called *vālakālu*, just like the improvised skits, but differ from them considerably in structure. A demoness (the *bhūtam yernamma*) is impersonated by the Vadram *pūjāri* and the village Barbers drive her out of the village with flaming bows and arrows. They are aided by crowds of Gavaras and Washermen who beat dried palm leaf stems and howl "woooo, woooo, woooo" just as when the sacrifice is made at the goddess' temple. The demoness is not driven out until she succeeds in taking some of the rice from one of the goddess' *ghaṭṭam* pots. It was explained that the principle involved is the same as that used in one method of casting out evil eye, *diṣṭi*. Three rice balls (each usually of a different colour: red from vermillion, yellow from turmeric, and black from pot soot) are individually raised and lowered (a movement referred to as *digaduyaḍam*) in front of the persons suspected of having incurred evil eye. The rice balls are then thrown through the legs of the person being 'exorcised.' The *ujiḍi banḍi*, like the *ghaṭṭam* pot of rice offerings in the Ravalamma demoness impersonation, is thought to work as a diversion to lure demons to a rice offering which is not the main one intended for the goddess herself.

Branches of neem (*vēpa*, margosa, lat.: *melia azadirachta*) feature in a number of contexts in the Bandamma festival associated with cooling. They are used to decorate the palm leaf umbrella used in the evening processions.[8] Neem branches are carried by the holders of the incense pot, whisked over firewalking pits, held by people whilst firewalking, and held by people who are possessed by the goddess and hence overheated. Neem branches are also tied around the neck of the sacrificial goat and attached to pots of offerings, apparently to urge the goddess to be cool.

The meaning of neem leaves also derives from their being an emblem of the goddess in numerous other contexts. Among certain Brahmanical

customs known in the area, though not as widely practised here as in other regions of South India, is the performance of a marriage ceremony between a neem tree and a pipal tree (*rāvi*, lat. : *Ficus religiosa*). In this, the neem tree is considered to be female and the pipal, male. Thus, the use of neem in connection with goddess festivals seems also to be associated with femaleness. The neem tree begins flowering around the time of the Telugu New Year and hence presages the season of goddess festivals.

Danger, Sexuality and Heat

To understand the depiction of the goddess as jealous, threatening, and coercive, a closer look at the festival activities is necessary. Many of these clearly identify the goddess with ideological notions about female character, their excessive *āśa* and the potential threat to society of their uncontained sexuality.

At the initiation of the Bandamma festival, representatives of the village worship at a termite mound and take a pinch of dirt from it. The significance of the termite mound is that in addition to being the abode of a *grāma dēvata*, it is also considered to be the abode of snakes, particularly dangerous cobras. The ritual of Nagula Caviti is an annual propitiation of cobras at termite mounds right after Dipavali. It appears that the potential of goddesses to harm is associated with the harmfulness of snakes

In a similar way, the worship of the goddess is associated with the propitiation of rather dangerous ghosts. We have already mentioned the use with the *ghaṭṭams* of *dāka* pots used in ghost exhorcism. It will also be recalled that ghost appeasement is the purpose of the 'decoy offering' in the precinct of the Bandamma shrine the night preceding the final day of the festival. The offerings of rice on rice sieves which are placed in this wheeled basket, *ujiḍi banḍi*, are the same as those offered to ghosts which are placed on the bier of a corpse about to be taken away for cremation. Ghosts also have to be forceably driven off with sticks and shouts at the time of the final sacrifice and blood offering to Bandamma. It will be recalled that ghosts represent the persistance of people's *āśa* after their death, and that the majority of dissatisfied ghosts tend to be female.

Activities in the festival which specifically demonstrate the goddess' powerful presence are incidents of possession and the performance of firewalking. Especially through the customary possession of the washerman at the time of the final procession, the heat and violence of her power are made visible to all. The great efforts required to restrain him and cool him off attest to the uncontrolled energy which is associated

with the presence of the goddess in his body and her proximity to the crowd through him.

The displays of firewalking, on the other hand, are manifestations of her power which are more clearly directed towards benevolent ends. Her presence seems to counteract the normal physical effects of fire on the body of her devotees. Just as she cured them of their illnesses, she protects them against the heat of the firepits. (Illnesses, entailing fever are said to be manifestations of overheating in the body.) At the same time they demonstrate their fearlessness of pain as a tribute to her power.

The heat of sexual passion is also associated with the goddess. The proceedings on the last day of the festival have an urgent air, analogous to sexual arousal. The tempo of the drumming creates a compelling, quickened rhythm. The procession rushes to the temple amidst rather menacing explosions of fireworks and crackers which at times seem to be thrown at random into the crowd. The climax is the sacrifice followed by a hasty withdrawal from the temple precinct. The calm which follows further enhances the analogy with sexual release.

Terms for Motherhood as Euphemisms of Tribute

The notion of the goddess as jealous and potentially vindictive gives rise to the necessity to appease and flatter her, manipulatively if necessary. The most usual way this is done is through worshippers stressing their subordination to her through the symbolic forms of *pūja*. There is, however, an additional technique that is part of the same phenomenon. It consists of the use of euphemism and manipulative naming. First, there are terms referring to ritual items such as *niḷḷālu*, 'waters', for the firewalking trough, and *puṭṭa-bangāram*, 'termite-mound gold', for the termite mound earth used at the initiation of the festival. Then there are the emphemisms for smallpox blisters, normally called *pokkulu*, which are referred to as *kuṇḍalu* 'pots'. This avoidance of terms specifically associated with the disease-causing function of the goddess leads us to consider the name of the goddess herself and its use to describe affliction with smallpox.

The individual names of village goddesses are compounded from a proper name and the ending *-amma*. The proper name sometimes has a specific meaning (e.g. *bangār-amma* 'gold', *mutyāl-amma* 'pearl', *paiḍ-amma* 'gold', *paradēś-amma* 'foreign', *bhūlēkh-amma* 'earthly realm') while others are without known meanings (e.g. *nūkāl-amma, rāval-amma,* etc.). The ending -amma has a number of applications in other contexts. On its own it means 'mother', both as a term of reference and term of address. It is also found in other kinship terms such as *nānnamma,* 'father's mother', (*nānna,* 'father') and *ammamma*, 'mother's mother'

(*amma* + *amma*). It also occurs in female personal names (e.g. *nārāyan-amma, venkay-amma, appay-amma*) as well as a suffix of address (e.g. *urikēḷtānamma* = *ūriki* + *vēltānu* + *amma* 'I am going to the village, ma'am').

Significantly, the suffix *-amma* can also be used among males, particularly to strangers in requests which are at once pleading and affectionate. A villager begging a gatekeeper in town to give him access to a hospital will use *amma* as if to say "won't you let me in, friend?" In such cases, the manipulative use of the suffix *-amma* is achieved through the allusion to the mother-child relationship. It is not meant to express an already existing relation of affection but rather to manoeuvre the person addressed into a position where it is difficult for him to refuse.

Somewhat similar use is made of the word *talli*, another word meaning 'mother'. Its use is more restricted than *amma*, tending to be employed more as a term of reference than as a term of address. It occasionally replaces *amma* in the name of a village goddess. Bandamma is sometimes referred to as *Bandḍitalli*. *Talli* is also used like *amma* to express a request for motherly help and affection in a figurative sense. A Mala woman exclaimed, "*talli, talli*" during an incident in which I was going to fetch a doctor from outside the village in an effort to save her gravely ill husband. The allusions in that statement were a request that I act protectively towards her, to my higher status and lack of a real tie of obligation between us, and to the requests for mercy people make to village goddesses imploring them with the repetition of "*talli, talli.*"

This brings us back to consideration of the names of goddesses and their link with disease. Here we must consider the implications of the term *ammavāru* (and its synonym *ammatalli, amma* + *talli*). Literally speaking, *ammavāru* is a respectful form of *amma*, *-vāru* being a form of the honorary suffix *-gāru* (equivalent to the Hindi—*jī* as in *Gāndhi jī*) which is used after male and female names to connote respect. In actual usage, however, *ammavāru* means 'village goddess' and 'smallpox.'[9] When the word *ammavāru* is used to refer to the disease of smallpox, it is in a euphemistic sense. Just as blisters have a 'real' name (*pokkulu*), smallpox also has a name, *maśūcikam*. But it is felt that the use of these actual names will anger the goddess since they are patently undesirable things. The strategy is to flatter the goddess by using terms having connotations of affection and protection. In this way, it is hoped that the goddess will live up to these expectations. At the same time there is a sense in which the goddess herself knows that the euphemistic terms exaggerate the actual state of affairs. She is expected to appreciate the exaggeration as an offering of submission, an act of grovelling which acknowledges her power. *Śakti*, 'power' (in a general sense including bodily, political, and

ritual power) is another synonym for village goddess and expresses the identification of the goddess with her influence over illness and health.

In this pattern of coercion by the goddess and manipulative submission by worshippers we discern the pattern which we observed in the relationship between castes. A caste's members feel to themselves that they are higher than members of many other castes, while they have to accept submissive roles for the sake of the smooth functioning of society. The manipulative aspect involved in this behavioural collusion (necessitated by the conflict between their own self-exaggerated notion of their status as opposed to others' opinions of them) is replicated in the manipulative use of euphemistic terminology when dealing with village goddesses. Both are the consequence of an underlying ideology of hierarchy.

This phenomenon of euphemistic flattery, employing terms of endearment, to avoid reference to the fearful, destructive nature of the goddess, seems to echo an ambiguity in the role of women in society (as it is perceived chiefly by men). The *āśa*, worldly attachment of women, is a double-edged sword. When working positively, it expresses itself as intense emotional attachment, i.e. motherly or wifely love. When working negatively, women's over-emotional proclivities (as culturally defined and expressed—see discussions of funerals, widowhood, role of women, etc.) have a jealous, destructive side. Thus, while the worship of village goddesses is not a mirror reflection of hierarchical social relations, it utilises many of its symbolic forms and ambiguities for its own metaphorical purposes.

Skits and Dramas: Mediation and Resolution of Structural Ambiguities by Ritual

We have just seen how the goddess is depicted by means of allusions to aspects of the role of wives and mothers in society. An extension of this phenomenon is the significance of skits and dramas in the festival ritual.

The two varieties of performance offer radically different images of people. In the skits we are presented with an exaggeratedly negative picture of disloyal and insubordinate wives. In the dramas, on the other hand, the characters are exaggeratedly positive. They embody virtue to a nearly superhuman extent and thereby induce the benevolent intervention of the gods.

To explain the contrast between these two different portrayals we need to understand them in the context of the Bandamma festival. The skits occur at the phase in the rituals in which the goddess' ambiguity toward the community is only in the process of being altered. It is during the time when she has not been fully ingratiated to the community for the coming year. Thus, the skits feature the theme of the threats to social

harmony of a woman not adequately controlled by a superior male, or of inferiors who do not accept subordination to their superiors. Such threats, especially with their 'close to the bone' portrayals, are depicted with such exaggeration that they become a source of humorous amusement.

Marriage and social situations arising from it are the focus of the satire of the *vālakālu* skits. These involve the violation of the authority of parents, reversals in the hierarchy of the sexes, allusions to adultery, as well as conflicting demands made on husbands and wives by their families. Generally, the skits involve members of the Gavara caste but even where they deal with non-Gavaras (Madigas, Vadrams and Carpenters) few lack reference to marital problems of some sort. Often the actors in the improvised skits satirise relatives with whom they have licence to joke. Since such relatives are of the marriageable category, this contributes an additional association of sexuality, marriage and joking.

The following are representative descriptions of seven different skits:

(i) A young woman, played by a man wearing a sari, stays away from her husband at her father's house. She defies her father's exhortations that she return to her husband. Every time he suggests she return to him, she feigns illness. Finally, the father decides to hold a *śānti* ceremony to dispel the bad astrological influences which cause her to fall mysteriously ill every time he mentions her husband. A mock *śānti* ceremony is staged, to the great amusement of the audience. A cloth is held between the husband and wife and Brahmanical chants are hilariously imitated. The Brahman is also satirised as being avaricious. He repeatedly urges them to make offerings of small coins since in addition to his fee the priest always gets to keep the items which are used in the *pūja*.

(ii) This skit was a re-enactment of an incident in which the goddess' *pūjāri* had been knocked down in a heated argument with his son-in-law. The man was in the audience at the time and stood up and protested. Members of the audience shouted for him to sit back down. His behaviour was regarded by everyone as bad form in the context of a skit. The *pūjāri* had further reason to feel sensitive since the satire also contained oblique references to his wife having cuckolded him. She was widely rumoured to be a woman of loose morals and at one time was allegedly the mistress of a prominent Gavara elder.

(iii) A woman prays to the goddess for her husband to go blind so that he will not be able to see her boyfriends. The husband overhears her and pretends he is blind. The woman believes that her husband

has gone blind and proceeds to invite numerous boyfriends for dinner. The wife puts poison in the food intended for her husband but while she is out of the room he mixes it into the food on the other plates. After the meal, all the guests die. Then the wife has the problem of getting rid of the dead bodies. She enlists the help of a wandering beggar by means of a generous bribe. He throws a body into a well and comes back for his payment. He is surprised to find what he thinks to be the same body back in the house. He then dumps this body into the well and returns only to do a double-take when he discovers another body to be disposed of. Many bodies later, and after this routine has been used to send the audience 'rolling in the aisles' with laughter, the husband opens his eyes and shouts at his wife for her attempted deception.

A number of interesting comments on husband-wife relations come out in the actual dialogue and miming of this plot, which is improvised as it goes along (though a skeleton plot is thought up and agreed upon beforehand). The wife starts cooking her husband some millet gruel, *ambali*, a preparation looked down upon as cheaper and inferior to rice. She then begins to flirt with members of the audience, allowing her sari end to slip off immodestly.[10]

The wife then comments "Oh, these expensive saris never stay on. They keep falling off!" Later in the skit when she brings her husband his meal of gruel, he sarcastically remarks, "You always bring me this miserable gruel to eat but spend three hundred rupees for an expensive sari."

At another point, the 'battle of the sexes' is waged with sarcastic remarks on *pativratadharmam*,[11] auspicious wifehood.

Wife: (brags, gossiping with another woman): "Do have a husband who is equal to mine?" (long pause) "Well, maybe our husbands are similar after all—your husband has a crooked mouth and mine has a crooked arse."

Wife: (enters her house and begins ordering her husband to help her take a heavy basket off her head): "Come on, help me take this basket off my head. Do it slowly, . . . be careful."

(As he helps her she uses the opportunity of his bending over to step on his head.)

Wife: "Due to my devotion to you as a loyal wife (*nā pativrata-dharmam)* if I put my foot on your head, I will go straight to heaven."

Husband: "Hey! Are you putting your foot on my head?"

Wife: "Yes, doesn't every wife? . . . Hold on, I'll take my leg

down" (said as she steps on him even more emphatically) "Ah, I maintain such loyalty to you. From the day I was born I never desired any other man!" (Aside: "Except Penta Rao").[12]

In the part of this skit in which the wandering beggar is instructed to take the first dead body, the wife described the person using a nickname meaning 'stub finger'. This was an allusion to the old Gavara man who was known to have been 'keeping' the Vadram *pūjāri's* wife as his mistress. In the joking, reference was made to his having lost his ring because he also lost his finger with it. The man, who actually was missing one finger, recently had been accused by his wife of giving away one of his gold rings to his mistress. He staunchly maintained that he had lost it. Considering his reputation for miserliness, it seemed highly unlikely that he had inadvertently lost a gold ring.

The wandering beggar of the skit was a reference to the recent visit of a *Gudda-gaṇṭal-ŏ̄ḍu* 'man with a bell at his buttocks'. This variety of itinerant beggar, of the Muslim *Rēyyi Turaka* caste, circulates in the middle of the night (e.g. 3 a.m.) with a bell tied behind him. He goes from house to house and chants a prayer for household well-being and crop fecundity, accompanying himself on a small hourglass-shaped frogskin drum.

It is significant that this particular itinerant beggar was included in the skit since it is part of a further allusion to wifely infidelity. This man appeared in the village always close on the heels of an itinerant bard and his wife, of the Mala Masti caste. In the previous year, the wife of the Mala Masti had run off with the itinerant beggar in the vicinity of Yatapalem. He was chastised and fined by his fellow caste men who held a dispute settlement session to discuss his case. The woman was sent back to her husband but it appeared that her affair with the itinerant beggar was far from finished since again this year they arrived in Yatapalem within a day or two of each other.

(iv) A man comes home drunk, too late in the day to perform the Nagula Caviti ceremonial offerings to snakes in termite mounds. This is a festival that has to be performed by husband and wife together. The man acted as though he were drunk, but everyone in the village knew that he had been off visiting his girl friend in another village at the time.

(v) This skit is a situation of a conflict of interest in the marriage between a woman's husband and her parents. A woman's father takes and sells the gold necklace which she has received from her husband at the time of her marriage. The situation in the skit

revolves around the woman's predicament when her husband refuses to accept her back until she can produce the necklace.

(vi) A skit concerns a man who has only daughters and no sons. It criticises his pressuring his daughter to work for him in his fields, to the dismay of her husband. The skit elaborates the problem of sex role violations by a series of jokes about making female buffaloes pull a sugar-cane press (customarily only male buffaloes are used) and milking a male buffalo. The buffaloes were represented by small boys who enjoyed participating in the skit. They kicked the main actors when they bent over to determine the sex of the buffaloes before milking them.

(vii) A man was criticised by his brothers for spending all his effort helping out his father-in-law in agricultural activities. The issue of the wife having an informal share in her father's land was the occasion for remarks about a branch of the Rapeti clan. Allegedly they would only agree to a particular marriage match with their son if they could get some of the bride's father's land.

The operatic dramas which form the night-long entertainment at the end of the final day of the goddess festival exhibit intriguing similarities with the improvised *vālakālu* skits. Like the skits, they are dramatic enactments of social conflicts and structural tensions (e.g. competition between brothers; a servant with obligations which conflict with ties to his master; a king torn between obligations to his wife and duty to uphold his word and protect his subjects; a wife struggling to remain faithful to her husband after she is abducted). These themes are dealt with by means of allegory rather than by reference to specific local people or conflicts. The plots of the dramas are based on mythological themes but are not always merely versions of the epics and Puranas (Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Bhagavatam). A number of the stories concern principal characters from the epics who are pitted against one another in unexpected ways. The plots often focus on seemingly irreconcilable conflicts of loyalty: Hanuman in conflict with Rama; Arjuna in conflict with Krishna; Dhrtarastra and Pandu, descendents of brothers, warring against each other; King Hariścandra's abandoning his wife and son in order to keep his word to the sage Viśvamitra.

Ultimately these stories are about tests of loyalty. Always those who act to keep their word to protect others, even at a cost of great self-sacrifice, force the gods to intervene to bring benevolent justice. The message is thus akin to *pūja* and merit-making. Self-subordination to a moral cause brings well-being to society as a whole (and, ultimately, salvation to the self-sacrificing individuals). Since the drama expressing these stories

occurs after the festival is over and has been successfully received by the goddess, its themes of loyalty and protectiveness are metaphors for the new relationship of the village community with their patron goddess.

In 1971 the drama staged for the Bandamma Festival was *Satyahariś-candra*.[13] In it, king Harischandra gives up his kingdom and eventually sells his wife, son and himself into slavery in order to be faithful to his word (hence *satya*, 'truth'). This conflict of his ties to his family as opposed to his ties to his subjects arises out of his obligations to the sage Viśvamitra. The latter's pride has led him to bet he can make Harischandra break his word. Viśvamitra gets Harischandra to offer him a vast sum of money in charity. Then he forces him to abdicate, rather than break his caste rules by marrying a low caste dancing girl. Viśvamitra then demands the money promised him, driving Harischandra to sell his wife and son into slavery to get the amount demanded. This is still not enough to satisfy the sage who demands more. But rather than break his word, Harischandra sells himself to an attendant of a cremation ground. He is reunited with his wife by chance when she brings his son, killed in an accident, for cremation. He is about to turn her away since she has no money to pay him, when he suddenly recognizes her. At this point the gods in heaven descend and reward Harischandra for his loyalty to his word and his selfless devotion to his subjects. His son is brought back to life, and he is able to return to his kingdom with his family.

The drama staged for the Bandamma Festival in 1972 was *Rāmān-janeyya Yuddham*, the battle of Rama and Anjaneyya (Anjaneyya = Hanuman). Normally, Hanuman is considered to be the loyal servant of Rama. In this play, however, they are brought into conflict. The plot revolves around the excessive pride of sage Viśvamitra who, far from renouncing worldly attachment, is concerned with petty status-seeking and vindictive jealousy. He is particularly insulted when he is not accorded his due share of acknowledgement of his hierarchical precedence over another sage, Vasista. The eventual outwitting of this jealous sage's curse is the subject of the subtitle of the drama, *Viśvamitra garvabhangam*, 'the defeat of the pride of Viśvamitra' (*garvam*, 'pride').

A king, Yayati, incurs the wrath of the sage Viśvamitra by first saluting (*daṇḍam*) another sage, Vasista, when he comes upon them meditating in their forest retreat. Viśvamitra curses the king and vows to have his head at his feet by sunset. He calls on Rama and asks for the fulfilment of an unpaid boon (*varam*) which Rama had granted him some time before when the sage had done severe penance and obeisance to Rama's name. Rama had little choice but to agree to the fulfilment of the curse, the bringing of King Yayati's head to Viśvamitra.

Meanwhile, at the instigation of Narada, mischievous messenger of the gods who is also a sage, Yayati goes to Hanuman's mother to request her to convince her son to protect him since his life is threatened. She agrees and gets Hanuman to give his word to protect the king. It comes as a great shock to Hanuman to learn that the king's adversary is none other than Rama, his own master. Despite having been deceived by the king, Hanuman maintains that his loyalty to Rama's own teaching to be steadfast to one's word means that he must attempt to defend the king.

Rama cannot bear the thought of fighting with his loyal servant and devotee and decides to leave his form as Rama and turn into Vishnu. Hanuman sings of his devotion (*bhakti*) to Rama in what is one of the most popular passages of the drama. His devotion is so great that he proposes to fight the formidable discus weapon of Vishnu with a bit of the dust from the feet of Rama, which is greater to him than a powerful weapon.

Like neighbours gathering when villagers fight, the gods gather and plead for the conflict to be resolved since the whole world is being rocked by the struggle. Narada saves the day by explaining a way out of their problems. By interpreting the sage's demand in a strictly literal fashion there is no need for the king to be killed. The king's head needs only to be brought and placed at the sage's feet. Nothing had been stipulated about severing the head from the king's body, even though the sage might have assumed that this would be so. Thus, Rama and Hanuman are both able to fulfil their obligations and avoid a conflict between themselves. The king is saved and the excessively proud sage is humbled by being outwitted.

Among other popular dramas performed by the villagers or attended by them in villages in the area are *Bālanāgamma*, *Gayōpakhyānam*, and *Kurukṣetram*.

(i) *Bālanāgamma, Lēka Māyala Pakīru* ('Young Nagamma, or the Sorcerer Fakir') deals with the trials and tribulations of a *pativrata*. She is abducted by an evil sorcerer but through her loyalty to her husband, she refuses to succumb to his advances. She then turns to stone from the head down. There follows a quest to find the sorcerer's secret retreat and snuff out the flame that renders him invincible. In the end, against all odds, the sorcerer is killed, and the woman recovers her normal body and is reunited with her husband.

(ii) In *Gayōpakhyānam* the Gandharva king Gaya (Gayudu) spits betel juice as he is flying in his aerial chariot. By chance, it lands in the

outstretched hands of Krishna, who is engaged in prayer. Krishna, deeply offended, vows to kill him. Gaya is terrified when he hears of this by means of a voice speaking from the sky. He goes to Brahma and then Siva for protection but both refuse him. He is distraught but then Narada arrives with a plan. He is to get Arjuna, Krishna's brother-in-law, to promise to protect him before he knows that this means a conflict with Krishna. He does this and the stage for the conflict is set.

Krishna sends his wife, Subhadra, to her brother Arjuna to intervene but he refuses to go back on his word to Gaya. Meanwhile, the Kauravas hope to exploit this internal conflict of the Pandavas with their ally Krishna. They plan to join temporarily with the Pandavas (brothers of Arjuna) in order to get Krishna out of the way. They then plan to turn on the Pandavas. Despite further attempts at intervention by other wives of Krishna—Rukmini, Satyabhama, and Devaki—Krishna and Arjuna face each other on the battlefield. Krishna launches into a lengthy description of all he has done for the Pandavas and again requests that they turn Gaya over to him. Arjuna humbly refuses.

As the combat between Krishna and Arjuna intensifies, Siva appears and intervenes. He stops them, saying to Krishna, "Gaya is your devotee and Arjuna is your own brother-in-law, you should not be engaged in battling with one another." Krishna withdraws his vow to kill Gaya and apologises to Arjuna. In return, Arjuna humbly offers him his apologies as well. Dharmaraja (Yuddhisthira, brother of Arjuna) comes and says a prayer to Siva and blesses Gaya saying that his story will live on to illustrate to the world the moral : "when prorection is needed, even by an enemy, it should be given without partiality or influence of relatives."

(iii) The drama *Kurukṣetram* deals with Arjuna's predicament of being at war with his own kinsmen. His brothers, the Pandavas, are in conflict with the Kauravas, who are his classificatory brothers since they are his father's brother's sons. Krishna, related to both sides, attempts to intervene. Krishna's father's sister is married to Pandu, the father of the Pandavas. But Pandu is also the brother of Dhrtarastra, the father of the Kauravas. In addition, Krishna's sister is married to Arjuna. This story is of course the story of the Mahabharata war, and Arjuna's conflict of loyalty between his various kinsmen is the inspiration for the renowned sermon of the Bhagavadgita. As part of its high philosophical message, the Gita should be recognised as addressing itself to that important problem in many villagers' lives, the conflict of brothers.

Participation by Gavaras and Higher Castes

So far we have examined the ideological content of the festival and seen how it endorses an ideal vision of hierarchy utilising its very contradictions. Now we turn to consider the relationships which are activated through the performance of the festival. Here, the economic, political and social position of the Gavara farmers emerges as predominant. Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis, as well as Kapu and Velama farmers play a peripheral role while the Gavaras assume dominance over the castes subordinate to them. This reflects the position of the Gavaras in other activities in the village which we have already discussed. The overall hierarchical structure of society is maintained, despite the presence of castes that are superior or equal to the Gavaras.

However, the festival activities should not be considered as simple reflections of the village power structure. Their role is also to serve as arenas in which the Gavaras palpably assert their dominance and demonstrate that the Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis do not challenge the Gavara leadership of the festival. The village goddess festivals are important as a means of Gavara dominance since they are the only major all-village occasions in which the Gavaras can publicly be seen in their dominant role.

The Gavaras provide the economic backing for the festival and drama through a levy (*canda*) on Gavara households. It is collected and managed by the Panchayat Vice-President, a Rapeti clansman of Yatapalem. This money is used for cash tips to the drummers, for the oil and incense used in the processions, for the construction of a drama stage, and for the hiring of the harmonium player, dancing girl, and costumes.

Gavaras determine the timing of the festival which, unlike that of most calendrical rituals, is not rigidly fixed. Gavara elders, particularly the Panchayat President and Headman, decide when the festival should take place. It is they who have the prerogative to postpone or change the timings of the festivals on the basis of astrological or economic considerations. In addition to their authority to determine the timing of the festival, the Gavara elders exercise considerable authority during the celebration proceedings. They determine the speed and route of the procession and control unruly members of the crowd.

Gavaras are prominent participants in the festival activities. During the last two days of processions they provide entertainment by performing dances, putting on displays of stick twirling and mock combat. They perform the *vālakālu* skits after the evening processions and also predominate in the drama performance. Gavaras collect the wooden idols from the Carpenters and also perform the goat sacrifice. Interestingly, the term *ijamāni* (or *yajamāni*) which means elder or head (and refers to the Gavara

village elders, *ijamānulu*) also carries the meaning 'person who institutes a sacrifice and pays for its performance.'

By contrast, the Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis tend to do individual *pūjas* at the goddess temple before the main procession arrives and leave before the rest of the villagers arrive. By their aloofness they maintain a nominal superiority which conceals their lack of any real influence in the conduct of the festival. These high castes are more evident at the evening drama performance. There, Komatis set up betel and tobacco stalls, and also participate in the drama as announcers and backstage prompters. Prominent Brahmans and Rajus also usually attend.

It might be argued that since the festival involves animal sacrifice the higher castes may have traditionally had little to do with it. This seems not to be the case. Komatis, who are vegetarians, take an active part in the festival proceedings. Their effusive praise of the goddess during the announcement of honorary tributes to the actors leaves little doubt about their commitment. Though the Rajus take less active part in the public activities there is no evidence that they are averse to the worship of village goddesses (which contrasts with their explicit scepticism over the cult of *bālapērantālu*, so popular among Shudras and Harijans in the region). In fact, the Raju stronghold of Vizianagaram town, seat of the Raju Maharaja of Vizianagaram, is renowned for its annual 'village' goddess festival, the *Paiḍimamba Panḍuga*.[14] This festival is explicitly patronized by the Maharaja and draws thousands of people from all over the district.

ASPECTS OF THE SYMBOLIZATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE BANDAMMA FESTIVAL

The performance of the goddess festival necessitates interdependent cooperative action by people and groups of differing statuses. We examine here how, by their activities, they bring ideology to life and make the character of the goddess a reality. We also consider how the occasion of the festival articulates sexes, families, castes, and settlements into a single common village endeavour.

Creation of the Character of the Goddess: Joint Emotional Involvement

The intense cooperative activity and emotional involvement of all the villagers in the festival creates the reality of the goddess' power. Admittedly, it has the elements of self-fulfilling prophecy, but without such dramatic reenactment, ideological concepts of the village goddess and the imperative to worship her would lose much of their compelling force.

There is an accelerating emotional build-up in the course of the festival

proceedings. First there are the evening processions and entertainments. As the last days of the festival draw closer, anticipation and excitement grow. Houses are whitewashed, relatives invited, and *pūja* supplies purchased. The Thursday market in Aripaka is particularly lively and the price of chickens soars. Drama actors can be heard practising their lines in the fields and *vālakālu* skit enthusiasts plan the coming night's entertainment.

The last two days of the festival are really a special event. Women wear their most dazzling and colourful saris and excitedly stand together on walls or sides of houses to watch the young men showing off their skills at stick-twirling or dancing. The drumming, which goes on for hours, causes the entire village to pulsate with its rhythmic tempo, a kind of collective quickening heart-beat.

Much drinking goes on and there are surges of conflict and sporadic outbursts of aggression. Even in the drumming there is an element of repressed aggression. At times Malas and Madigas play their drums facing each other in a sort of stylized confrontation and competition. The mock fights with swords and sticks also exhibit these features of controlled conflict.

The nearly uncontrolable possession (*pati vēyuṭa*) of the Kottapalem Washerman by the goddess, the ability of ordinary people to walk unharmed on glowing embers, and the presence of death in the beheading of the sacrificial goat are all emotionally stirring events which attest to the presence of the goddess. The tangible quality of the frightening, threatening power of the goddess is further created by the loud, unpredictable explosions of crackers and fireworks which are thrown dangerously at random into the crowd. The atmosphere of fear and menace of the goddess and the demons who hover about her temple culminates in the headlong flight from the temple immediately after the sacrifice as a contingent of men beat sticks and emit a weird whooping sound to divert the ghosts' attention away from the offerings.

From the above it can be seen that, to a great extent, the reality of the goddess is a direct consequence of the festival activities. These activities are made possible by the castes of the village cooperating with each other interdependently. The imperative to perform the festival of the goddess is thus an expression of an ideology that the castes must cooperate with each other for their mutual-well-being.

The Role of Women in the Festival

Despite the prominence of symbolism based on female roles, the goddess ritual is essentially a male-dominated event. It is only men, as representatives of castes and public social categories (e.g. *pūjāri* or Village Mes-

senger), who conduct the public events in which women remain peripheral. Nevertheless, women perform numerous tasks in the festival which demonstrate their indispensible role in society. It is women who have the prerogative of doing the goddess *pūja* when individual vow-fulfilment performances take place or when offerings on behalf of the household are made. The men stand aside as the women take charge of ritually purifying the temple with cowdung water, *muggu* diagrams on the ground, and turmeric and vermillion on the temple doorposts. Women are also in charge of conducting the *pūja* at the household shrine. Women are thus deeply involved in the goddess festival even though the men take over the main public activities of the festival such as the processions, the skits, drama, and sacrifice on the final day. Women's association with the more 'domestic' side of the rituals, when the rituals have a connection with the individual household, ties in with their role as being emotionally attached to their closest loved ones.

The fulfilment of obligations is a major theme of the morning activities on the final day of the Bandamma festival and many of these concern women. First of all, most private vow fulfilments and all household *pūjas* are conducted by women. In this way, it is emphasized that women's primary concern is the well-being of their families. Secondly, obligations between families who have exchanged women are also reinforced on the last day of the festival. This is the time when women who have married out of the village return and women from other villages are joined by their relatives from elsewhere. Such visits are the occasion for the preparation and exchange of holiday foods, another special domain of housewives.

It should be recognised that these festival activities serve to structure women's own perceptions of themselves. Women's ritual duties and outlets for enjoyment, dressing up, visiting relatives, witnessing colourful processions and shows are all confined to the context of their fulfilling socially allocated roles. At the same time, in order to ensure themselves and their families against misfortune they become involved in enacting an ideology which stresses the beneficial effects of their accepting their position in society. As we have seen, the festival symbolism prominently features the concept of the potentially anti-social consequences of uncontrolled female sexuality, and the notion of the inherently protective qualities of motherhood.

The Link of Individual Households to Village-Wide Activity, and Group-Defined Experience

Households' activities are synchronised with the activities of the whole village in a number of ways. The performance of vow-fulfilments

(*mokkubaḍi*) on the morning of the last day of the festival is one example. Fifty individual vow-fulfilments (*pūjas* and chicken sacrifices performed exclusively by women) is a conservative estimate of the minimum number performed on the morning of the final day of the festival.

Another way in which the activities of individual households are intermeshed with the festival of the village is the performance of *pūja* by women of every household at their household shrine at the beginning of the final *ghaṭṭam* pot procession. Women also make offerings on behalf of their household to the daily procession of *ghaṭṭam* pots and to the *ujiḍi baṇḍi*, the basket on wheels which is taken around the village in the middle of the night and then deposited at the temple to appease hovering demons.

ACTIVATION OF INTER-CASTE TIES

Castes' Ritual Job Specializations

As we have already seen, the village goddess festival is the occasion for intense inter-caste cooperation. The degree to which castes who are subordinate to the Gavaras prominently serve in the goddess festival parallels their roles as servants and employees of the farmers in the everyday economic and political life of the village. All the castes which are prominent are those which are clearly important dependents of the Gavaras. Higher (Brahman, Raju, Komati) or 'equal' castes (Velama, Kapu, Telukula) are notably peripheral. The only exceptions to this are the two castes Jangam and Vadram, which act as *pūjāris*, and the Carpenters whose status is in many respects indeterminate. It is striking that aside from these three castes, the remaining five castes, who play crucial subordinate roles, are members of the inferior dietary categories which eat domestic pork.

The following is a listing of the duties and participation of different castes in the Bandamma festival.

Vadram—One member of this caste is the guardian of the *ghaṭṭam* pots throughout the year and brings the goddess into the village at the initiation of the festival. The daily pot processions begin and end at his house. He and sometimes his wife carry the pots in the processions. He is in charge of making the special array of the pots at the temple before the *vālakālu* skits. He becomes possessed by the goddess. He collects and carries the wooden idols, *patimalu* to the goddess' temple. He holds up the sacrificial goat to the goddess and performs *pūja* while presenting the village's offerings to the goddess in her temple.

Jangam—One always accompanies the *ghaṭṭam* pot processions playing a special drum, *yarnam*, which gives a whining sound.

Carpenters (*Kamsali*)—They make the *ujiḍi banḍi* frame; carve the two wooden idols and replica seating stools, and do *pūja* to them before presenting them to the Gavara delegation which comes to take them in procession. They shoot off the fireworks during the final procession and goat sacrifice, and participate in the drama.

Settigollu—A Settigollu woman purifies and decorates (with a *muggu* diagram) the area where the *ghaṭṭam* pots are placed preceding the *vālakālu* skits. She also makes a special offering to the pots on the last day of the festival. Settigollu provide free liquor from their *sāra* (sugar-cane liquor) shops to the people doing special ritual jobs in the *ghaṭṭam* pot processions on the last two days of the festival, viz. Mala and Madiga drummers, Barber holders of umbrella and censer, and the Washerman holder of the torch.

Washermen (*Cakali*)—One always carries a torch and oil vessel for fuelling it at all processions of the *ghaṭṭam* pots. One accompanies the *ujiḍi banḍi* out to the temple of the goddess. Kottapalem Washermen carry the *ghaṭṭam* pots which go to Aripaka and Kottapalem on the last two days of the festival, and a Kottapalem Washerman is the *bhaṭṭuḍu*, traditionally possessed by the goddess.

Barbers (*Mangali*)—A Barber participates in the *ghaṭṭam* pot processions on all the days of the festival, carrying the palm leaf umbrella of the goddess. A Barber also carries a censer in the procession to the temple.

Mala—The Mala Village Servant (*Bārki*) who lives in Aripaka plays a prominent role in the festival. He accompanies the pot processions with his special drum, *dōlu*. He announces and pulls the *ujiḍi banḍi* to the temple of the goddess, holds up the goat to the goddess with a *danḍam* gesture before it is sacrificed, and speaks with the goddess through people possessed by her. Other Malas, also of Aripaka, participate in the drumming at the various pot processions and one Mala accompanies the Village Servant and a Washerman and Madiga who take the *ujiḍi banḍi* to the temple in the middle of the night. A Mala also leads the sacrificial goat in the procession to the temple.[15]

Madiga—They play a special variety of drum, *dappu*, in all processions of the *ghaṭṭam* pots on all the days of the festival and are the principal drummers for the dancing and stick-twirling displays. Madigas also accompany the *ujiḍi banḍi* out to the goddess temple.

During the performance of the festival non-villagers often play special ritual roles. For instance, a Madiga from another village might assist his fellow Madigas. On one occasion, a Barber from another village helped in the drumming and carrying of the palm-leaf umbrella. These men were all relatives of men in Yatapalem and they were just helping them out. However, this phenomenon of interchangeability attests to the fact that ritual duties such as drumming and carrying the umbrella are responsibilities of caste groups as wholes, within which individuals are interchangeable.

Payment in Cash and Kind

On various occasions during the celebration of the festival, members of the castes who perform special ritual duties are paid in cash and kind. The prominence of payment in kind seems to be associated with the sorts of jajmani inter-caste relationships observed, for example, between Gavaras and Washermen. The qualitative difference between these two modes of payment seems to lie in their hierarchical implications. Cash is a more 'symmetrical' form of payment. It is easily converted into numerous other commodities or stored and accumulated over time. By contrast, payment in kind is 'asymmetrical.' It is not readily exchangeable into other commodities or stored over time, particularly when it is in the form of raw meat or cooked rice. Payment in kind thus gives the recipient less autonomy and places him in a more clearly inferior position.

Castes receive payments for their ritual services on a number of occasions during the festival. At the end of the daily processions the Vadram *pūjāri* keeps the uncooked rice which has been collected as offerings. The cooked rice offerings are doled out to the Barbers, Washermen, Malas, and Madigas. On the last day of the festival, the drummers receive cash from the Vice-President to purchase liquor.[16] After the sacrifice, the body of the goat is given to the Carpenters, its skin is given to the Barbers (to make a new drum head for their ritual drums), and its head is given to the Mala Village Servant, the Barki. The chicken heads left at the temple during the morning vow-fulfilments become the property of the Barbers.

Begging

Begging plays an important role in paying castes for their ritual services and serves as an additional expression of the hierarchical nature of caste interdependence. Those who perform functions as *pūjāris*—the Village Servant and the Vadram—circulate in the village during the daytime on the penultimate and final days of the festival. They both go around carrying branches of neem (a basket hung with neem leaves in the case of the Vadram) which allude to their roles as goddess *pūjāris*. By contrast, the

main castes which are subordinate to the Gavaras (Washermen, Barbers, Settigollu, Malas, Madigas) circulate in the evenings. They go with begging baskets to Gavara houses where festival meals are being enjoyed.

The people who go around begging are referred to as 'poor people', *bīḍoḷḷu*, by Gavaras. However, poverty is not really the main criterion of the evening begging. Rather, inferior caste status is their distinguishing feature. Carpenters, who claim higher status, and genuinely poor people of castes equal to Gavaras (Kapu, Velama), or with the same dietary customs (Telukula Oil Pressers) are notably absent from the ranks of the beggars. This night begging, thus, entails an admission of inferior caste status.

INTER-SETTLEMENT TIES : MULTI-CASTE PARTICIPATION AND GHATTAM POTS

We now consider the significance of the Bandamma festival for the ties between the various settlements which comprise Aripaka Revenue Village. Firstly, the Bandamma and other goddess festivals (*grāma dēvata paṇḍugalu*) stand out as occasions of the greatest cooperative participation by all the settlements. The Gairamma festival to be discussed in Chapter 6 contrasts with them as a predominantly Gavara concern, conducted only in Yatapalem and Mallolla Pakalu. Moreover, even these two settlements celebrate separate festivals in honour of Gairamma. The Sankranti festival has activities requiring inter-settlement participation (e.g. a religious song-singing *bhajana* procession goes from Yatapalem to Aripaka) but these are not major components of the festival. While Aripaka stages its own religious song-singing, *bhajana*, and has its own Rama temple, it has no village goddesses separate from those worshipped by Yatapalem and its satellite settlements, Mallolla Pakalu and Kottapalem.

In the celebration of the goddess festival, Yatapalem is clearly the centre of activity. The nightly processions and the caste personnel (with the notable exceptions of the Village Servant, a Mala from Aripaka; and the *bhaṭṭuḍu*, possessed Washerman of Kottapalem) are all from Yatapalem. Leadership and finance of the festival all emanate from the Gavaras, of both Yatapalem and Mallolla Pakalu. Aripaka residents, in fact, contribute no money for the conduct of the festival. Their participation has a distinctly passive quality, with the *ghaṭṭam* pot being sent from Yatapalem to Aripaka on the final days of the festival.

The same pattern is discernible with relation to Kottapalem. Like Aripaka and its Village Servant, Kottapalem is a conspicuous participant in the rituals through one of its residents, the Washerman whose possession by the goddess is a regular feature of the festivals.[17] Kottapalem

Settigollu do, however, have a special ritual role to play in connection with the worship of Ravalamma. At the annual Sankranti fair in honour of Ravalamma and the triennial Ravalamma festival, Kottapalem's Settigollu carry one of the goddess' brass horses in procession. Yatapalem Settigollu carry the other one alongside them.

Despite these different degrees of participation by the settlements, the movements of the *ghaṭṭam* pots do serve to create and demonstrate the unity of the village and the interdependence, however superficial, of its settlements. A Barber woman in Yatapalem once commented, when asked whether Yatapalem and Aripaka were separate villages, that they are the same village "because the Aripaka pot goes with the Yatapalem *ghaṭṭam* pot in the village goddess festival."

The way in which the *ghaṭṭam* pots 'create' the reality of the village's unity is through the symbolic concepts of *darśanam* and *pūja*. The movements of the pots are equated with the movement of the goddess. She is brought into the village for a week which culminates in worshipping her at her temple. Her presence in the village is represented by the movements of her pots. Though the nightly procession makes a circle through only the main streets of the village, it represents the physical presence, *darśanam*, and sight of the goddess herself at every household. This also enables individual households to do *pūja* to the goddess—saluting her pot with a *daṇḍam* gesture, presenting rice offerings and turmeric and vermillion. Thus, the circulation of pots in Aripaka and other settlements defines and acknowledges the domain and sphere of influence of the goddess.

NOTES

1. *Guggilam* (a rosin, gum bdellium), a strong smelling incense used for village goddesses, contrasts with the delicate smelling *sāmbrāni* (the frankincense-like benzoin gum) used for other sorts of *pūjas*.
2. *Vālakam* 'pretence.'
3. A term related to *tolināḍu*, 'the day before.'
4. From *anupuṭa* 'to send, dismiss.'
5. 'Tank bund', hence *bandᵢ + amma*.
6. Pots, known as *kalasa*, with a coconut in the top were observed used to represent Siva and Vishnu in a sacred fire sacrifice, *yāgam*, conducted by Brahmans at the Gavaras' Gauri Parameshvari temple in Anakapalli. Shops selling religious lithographs in towns sell a picture of the goddess Lakshmi, as Sri Varalakshmi, superimposed on such a pot.
7. *Utsava vigrahālu*, 'festival idols' is the term for moveable idols specifically designed for this purpose.
8. The umbrella is an ancient symbol of royalty in India and also currently features in processions of Brahmanical temples. Holding an umbrella for someone is a symbol of showing respect.

9. Chicken pox and other epidemic diseases are associated with village goddesses, not just smallpox which though now eradicated still occurred during the period of field work.

10. Such actions of indecency would not be possible if the actors were not men masquerading as women. If women were to try such things, even while clearly acting, they would acquire a bad reputation. This of course underlines the atmosphere of suspicion which underpins male dominance of women and their beliefs about women's weakness to restrain their emotions and sexual urges. After all, even *Sīta*, the paragon of wifely constancy in the renowned Ramayana epic, was forced to undergo a test of her fidelity before being fully accepted back by Rama after he rescued her from her abductor in Lanka.

11. *Pativrata*, 'husband-devoted.'

12. This is a pseudonym.

13. A fuller discussion of this drama and its significance can be found in my "An Enactment of Perfect Morality : The Meaning and Context of a South Indian Ritual Drama" in A. C. Mayer (ed.), *Culture and Morality*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981, pp. 239-261.

14. On a Tuesday in the waxing fortnight of Asvayuja month.

15. The *Bārki* is also guardian of ritual items for Ravalamma.

16. Jangam Re. 1, Barbers Rs. 3, Washerman Rs. 3, Madigas Rs. 3.

17. A Velama of Aripaka used to be possessed but after his death no one in his settlement or caste replaced him.

CHAPTER 6

GAIRAMMA, SANKRANTI, AND OTHER CALENDRICAL FESTIVALS

GAIRAMMA : FESTIVAL FOR CROP FECUNDITY

The Gairamma Festival repeats many of the symbolic elements and contents which we have encountered in the Bandamma Festival. There are also numerous parallels between the structure of events in the two festivals such as the bringing of the goddess into the village, the nightly entertainment of the goddess, and the procession leading out of the village on the final day. However, Gairamma, a *dēvi*, differs from a village goddess, a *dēvata*, in a number of significant ways. First, Gairamma is believed to be wholly benevolent. Secondly, Gairamma, who is considered to be Gauri—the wife of the great god Siva—is married. In addition, unlike the village goddess who stays with the Vadram *pūjāri* during her festival, Gairamma is housed in the village Rama temple during her visit to Yatapalem. The procession on the final day of the Gairamma Festival is a fond farewell to take her idol and respectfully immerse it in a tank. She is placed in a palanquin like a bride for the journey. No animal sacrifice is required or involved in her worship.

Another difference between Gairamma and the village goddess festivals is the special involvement of the Gavara caste. On a number of occasions Gavaras commented that the Gavara caste (pronounced 'gaura') is the caste of Gauri (Gairamma = Gauri + amma). Apart from this resemblance in name, Gauri is intimately associated, through this festival, with abundance and fecundity of the crops, a central concern of the Gavaras. In any case, the non-Gavara castes of Aripaka were not involved in the celebrations. The range of settlements involved in the Gairamma celebrations is even more narrow than this, since the Gavaras of Mallolla Pakalu and Yatapalem each hold separate Gairamma celebrations. This contrasts with the village goddess festivals in which the participation by the entire

revenue village is a prominent feature. The absence of Aripaka's participation does not, however, appreciably change the fundamentally hierarchical relationship of the Gavaras with dependent castes (Washermen, Barbers, Harijans) in the rituals. The caste relationships in the Gairamma festival are essentially similar to those in the village goddess festival.

Outline of the Gairamma Festival

In discussing the Gairamma Festival, we first sketch an outline of the main activities and then follow with a more detailed consideration of certain features. It is useful to note that the festival is structured in three parts—the initiatory day on which the goddess' idol is brought into the village, the subsequent days (of no fixed number) on which *pūjas* and nightly entertainments are offered daily, and the final day with its farewell procession to take the idol to be immersed in a tank.

On the initiatory day, an idol of the goddess is brought into the village by Washermen who have been delegated to purchase it in Anakapalli. The papier mâché idol depicts Gauri and Siva (with Ganga in his hair), seated on the bull, Nandi. A Jangam, acting as a *pūjāri*, cleans a room in the Yatapalem Rama temple and places in it a pot with a turmeric root tied around its rim with a string. Village Barbers provide a drumming escort to the Washermen as they return with the idol and bring it to the Rama temple.

That afternoon there is a procession to gather live rice plants to place in the pot with the turmeric root. Washermen carry a flaming torch (even though the activity is in the daytime) as Barbers and Madigas lead the way with their drumming. A Gavara woman who desires to have children carries the Gairamma pot from the temple. Once the procession goes outside the settlement it enters a green field of rice. Gavara men select three rice stalks (*vari dubbu*), pull them up by the roots, and plant them in the pot. The rice plants chosen are not, however, ones bearing rice grains. Villagers explained this is because plants without seeds stay green and live longer.

The procession returns to the village where it continues through the streets on the way back to the temple. It is led by young Gavara men who individually perform stick-twirling displays, *sāmu gariḍi*, while groups of others form a circle to do an intricate dance, *ciratalu* (called *siratalu* by the villagers), requiring coordinated beating of each other's pair of short sticks. Women walk together following the procession while young men carry sugar-cane stalks and freshly uprooted rice plants, walking beside the Gairamma pot. These men say that this is to ensure the protection of their crops from insects, animals, birds, and evil eye (*diṣṭi*). As the procession proceeds, housewives come out to make offerings, part of which

are returned as *prāsādam*. These offerings consist of oil, turmeric and vermillion, sugar-cane pieces and bananas.

The Gairamma pot is brought to the temple. Gavara men place the pot and idol into a side room of the Rama temple, one otherwise used for storage. The Jangam *pūjāri* performs a *pūja*, breaking a coconut and placing in front of the idol offerings which allude to auspicious wifehood such as a wooden cosmetic case used to store vermillion powder (*kumkum bariṇi*), a small mirror of the kind auspicious women use when applying their vermillion forehead dot (*boṭṭu*), bangles, flowers, and leaves of *tulasi* (sweet basil). A Gavara elder garlands the bull Nandi with a string of fried confections (*unḍrālu*)[1] made from millet flour and jaggery. The Jangam *pūjāri* lights a brass oil lamp which is kept burning continuously for the entire duration of the goddess' stay in the village.

That evening the villagers perform entertainments to amuse Gairamma. Young Gavara men gather in front of the temple and do the *ciratalu* stick dance in a circle. Improvised *vālakālu* skits of the kind staged for the village goddess are considered an optional activity. When they are done they do not differ from those performed in the village goddess festivals. Songs are sung to Gairamma including a lullaby (*jōla pāṭa*) to put her to sleep. These songs are sung by Gavara men who sit in front of the Gairamma idol. Their songs are accompanied by a rhythmic rubbing of one stick up and down another stick which is ribbed and is rested on an overturned basket for resonance. Mala women occasionally participate in this singing to Gairamma.

Every subsequent day of the festival a daily *pūja* is performed and evening entertainment is provided. The number of days this goes on is not fixed and depends on the wealth of the community and the prosperity brought by the last harvest, a factor that varies from year to year. In 1970, the festival lasted 17 days while in 1971 it went for 24. The daily *pūja* consists of an offering of a meal of cooked rice and dal served on a banana leaf plate. Incense is burned and a camphor flame is lit. The meal is left inside with the goddess as the temple doors are closed for a while for her to partake of its essence. It is then taken out and eaten as *prasādam* by the *pūjāri*. On Saturdays, a special sweet dish is offered by the *pūjāri*. Known as *paramannam*, it is made of rice cooked with jaggery. In addition, women take their weekly baths and come to the temple to do a *pūja* to Gairamma. In the evening there is entertainment as described above, consisting of dancing, possibly skits, and sleeping songs. It is the duty of the Jangam *pūjāri* to ensure that the lamp with the goddess is kept constantly replenished with oil.

On the penultimate day of the festival, a Madiga drummer goes around the village announcing that the final celebration, *sambaram*, is to be held

the next day. The daily *pūja* is performed as usual but the evening entertainment is more exuberant than on previous days. Gavara men busy themselves preparing a palanquin for the following day's procession, which has been supplied by the Carpenters.

On the last day the heightened air of festivity is enhanced in the afternoon by Gavara men and children who go around the village 'for fun', masquerading as itinerant entertainers such as *gangireḍḷu* who take trained bulls around and play a shenai-like horn, begging from house to house. Celebrations at the temple begin in the late afternoon. First, a hired brass band of Barber-caste musicians arrives from Anakapalli. Gavara men then begin performing three kinds of dances, the *kōya* dance, the *ciratalu* stick dance, and pole twirling (*sāmu gariḍi*). Simultaneously, a stream of women, mainly Gavaras, come to present offerings to Gairamma. The offerings consist primarily of oil for the lamp for Gairamma and varying combinations of other *pūja* items such as turmeric, vermillion, incense, sugar-cane pieces, bananas, coconuts, tulasi leaves, and flowers.

In the evening, Gavara men place the idol of Gairamma into the palanquin which has been gaily decorated with coloured paper. The Gairamma pot with its live rice plants is carried on a seating board, *pīta*, on the head of a Gavara woman who is desirous of having children. The procession begins, led by stick and *kōya* dancers with the hired band, then the drummers—Jangam, village Barbers, the Mala Village Servant, and village Madigas—and finally, the Gairamma palanquin carried by four Washermen.[2] Alongside the palanquin goes the Gairamma pot. A pressure lamp is carried by a Barber and a fire torch by a Washerman. It is not a required feature of the procession but often Jangams ring a bell and blow on a conch shell, acts associated with worship of Gairamma's husband, Siva.[3]

Girls and young women walk beside the palanquin singing songs in praise of Gauri (Gairamma). One song, mentioning Gauri's wedding, is also encountered in the context of child-naming and wedding rituals. Its refrain goes, "*gauri kalyāṇamō sabāgyam, sīta kalyāṇamō vaibagyam*,"[4] referring to the auspiciousness of Gauri's wedding and the splendour of Sita's wedding.

Much drinking takes place among adult men including the drummers, the dancers, and Gavara and non-Gavara bystanders. Numerous small fights break out, resulting from the emotional excitement of the festival and the effects of drink. Fireworks are set off by the Carpenters throughout the procession once it gets dark.

When the procession arrives at a village tank outside of Yatapalem, the palanquin is set down and *pūja* is performed to the Gairamma idol by a Gavara elder, usually aided by the Jangam *pūjāri*. Components of the *pūja* include the breaking of a coconut, the smearing of ghee on the mouth of

the bull Nandi, and the lighting of incense. This is followed by the lighting of a camphor flame (*hārati*).

The idol is lifted and placed on the head of a young Gavara married woman as the crowd cheers, '*gōvinda*' (strictly speaking an epithet of Krishna but used generically in the sense of 'hurrah') and '*jai śankara*' ('victory to Siva'). A young Gavara man takes the Gairamma pot on his head. Then, accompanied by a Washerman carrying a flaming torch, they wade into the tank and tip the idol and pot into the water. At this moment, the fireworks and drumming which has been incessant, suddenly stop. The villagers walk back to the village leisurely, arm in arm.

Notable Features of the Gairamma Rituals

Many of the features of the Bandamma festival can be recognised in the Gairamma rituals. Forms of *pūja*, *vālakālu* skits, and patterns of caste participation are all very similar to those in the village goddess festivals. There are, however, certain features which merit further attention. Firstly, as we have already noted, the character of Gairamma is more unambiguously benevolent than village goddesses. Gairamma is associated with the ripening of crops and fecundity of women. Allusions to the fecundity of women are found in the occurrence of elements of wedding symbolism: offerings of items associated with married status (bangles, mirror, turmeric and vermilion, flowers, tulasi leaves), use of ritual items which are also employed in weddings (pot with a turmeric root tied to its rim, procession in a palanquin, and the singing of songs about weddings), activities of the goddess (palanquin procession), and even iconography (depiction of Gauri seated next to her husband, Siva). There are also the ritual roles assigned to barren women who wish to have Gairamma's fecundity 'rub off' onto them such as the women who carry the Gairamma pot of growing rice stalks.

We have already interpreted the significance of the *vālakālu* skits and operatic dramas in the Bandamma festival as the ritual incorporation of aspects of social tension and conflict. In consonance with Gairamma's association with fecundity and fertility we note that the skits and dances in her festival carry particularly erotic overtones, beyond what we have observed in the Bandamma festival. We now examine the stylized scenarios of these men's dances in greater detail.

The *kōya* dance appears to derive its name from a hill tribe, the Koyas, but there is no obvious connection with them. Perhaps it was once a dance in which people imitated tribals in the genre of popular Telugu cinema. In any case, the *kōya* dance now current throughout Visakhapatnam District consists of at least three costumed male dancers. One of the men is dressed as a Muslim with a *lungi*, a waistcoat, a felt Muslim-style cap,

and a moustache and beard drawn on his face with soot. The other male character is dressed in a Hindu *dhoti* and wears a turban in a farmer's style. The female character is a man dressed as a woman, with heavy makeup and jewellery.

They act out two main 'plots' while gyrating to the cinema-style music of the brass band. The first is the competition of the two men for the favours of the woman, whose bold advances and wanton leers are relished by the principally male audience that gather around them. The second plot is a sort of mock snake-charmer routine which makes further comments on male-female relations. One male figure employs a handkerchief or shoulder cloth with one end in his teeth to imitate a snake-charmer's flute. While the band plays a 'snake-charmer melody', the female character pretends to be a charmed snake. After being somewhat lulled by the snake-charmer, the snake-woman (*nāgini*) suddenly bites him. He rolls on to the ground and seems to be dying. The snake-woman appears to regret her treachery and eventually revives him back into a dance with her.

The erotic content and effect of these dances is overt and seems to be a further example of the ritual harnessing of erotic and aggressive impulses to the emotional power of the communal ceremonial event.

There is also social significance in the themes of the *ciratalu* and *sāmu gariḍi* dance forms. The choreography of the *ciratalu* dance is based on the intricate co-ordination of a circle of men. Every dancer has a stick in each hand which he uses to hit those of both of his neighbours in complicated sequences of armcrossing. They also break into two circles of dancers which move around each other in opposite directions or perform sequences of bending down and rising up. The beating of the sticks is done with such precision and synchronization that there is almost the impression that only two sticks are being beaten together. The unison and co-operation that are required to execute this dance seem to express and enact the value of interdependent co-operation of Gavara men.

In contrast, the *sāmu gariḍi* expresses individual competitiveness, aggression, and the desire to show off. This 'dance' consists of twirling a large bamboo pole with one hand, to the accompaniment of drumming. These displays of individual skill are accompanied by bouts of mock combat in which two dancers beat each other's poles in between pauses for a sort of proud strutting movement performed to the rhythm of the music. Another associated procession display is the waving of a sword, also performed by strutting with a puffed-out chest. (This proud, strutting gait is encountered in some neighbouring villages and towns in the form of dancers masquerading as tigers, *pulli vēṣam*.)

It is significant that the Gavaras in the settlements of Yatapalem and

Mallolla Pakalu each staged separate Gairamma celebrations. This was, in fact, the only evidence of any overt differentiation between them. The disparity in wealth between the settlements and Mallolla Pakalu's physical distance from Yatapalem are possible motivations for its mounting a separate performance of this ritual which is so closely associated with crop fecundity. This important issue will be discussed at greater length later. It is, however, worth noting here that the Gairamma festival can be used to express differentiation and division as well as interdependence and inclusion. Interestingly, the Mallolla Pakalu Gairamma procession includes a round in the nearby hamlet of Kottapalem before the idol is immersed.

SANKRANTI : THE HARVEST AND THE ANCESTORS

The Sankranti (*sankrānti*) festival differs in numerous ways from the village goddess and Gairamma festivals though it shares many fundamental elements that express hierarchical tribute and social interdependence. While the village goddess and Gairamma festivals are mobilizations of entire settlements to worship particular dieties, Sankranti is more centred on ancestors and caste groups. This is not to say that deities do not feature in these rituals. Rama is honoured by daily *pūjas* and occasional *bhajanas* in the preceding month. At various times the shrines of village goddesses and *bālapēraṇṭālu* are the venues of fairs. Sankranti is notable for the broad range of its interpenetrating associations. It marks the beginning of the auspicious half of the year (*uttarāyana puṇya kālam* or *uttarāyanam*), celebrates the completion of the harvest, involves the annual honouring of the household ancestors, and includes the annual *pūja* to domestic animals, occupational tools and vehicles.

We now describe the sequence of the main ritual events associated with Sankranti. It will be observed that far from being a single day's festival, this is an entire season of ceremonies which extends from the end of November into early February. This is because the rituals are intimately linked to the rhythm of agricultural activities which intensifies over several months and reaches a climax with the harvesting of the crops. The major rituals leading up to, centring on, and following Sankranti consist of: the first harvest, *pīdantuṭa*; the month of activities called *nelaganṭa*, preceding Sankranti and during which the harvest takes place; the three principal days of Sankranti itself, known as *bhōgi*, *sankrānti*, and *kanumu*; and the ensuing season of fairs, *tīrtham*,[5] beginning with Aripaka Revenue Village's own Ravalamma Tirtham.

The first harvest ritual, called *pīdantuṭa*, takes place toward the end of November at a time determined by consulting the astrological almanac

or someone adept in its use. Different families perform it on quite different dates; there is no single specific day for all. On the chosen day, any male member of a household (even a young boy) takes a chicken to his rice field. He circumambulates the field with the chicken and repeatedly says the *mantram* (magical words), "*polē*, *polē*." It is believed that these words cause the crop to increase. He stops, beheads the sacrificial chicken and drips its blood on to the field at a spot where he cuts the first three stalks of rice. These stalks with their ripe heads of grain are taken back to the village and offered first to his family ancestors in the god corner inside his house. The performance of *pīdantuṭa* serves as the official auspicious beginning of the harvesting even if the actual work is done later on.

Nelaganṭa, the month preceding Sankranti, begins in mid-December when the Sun enters the zodiacal constellation of Sagitarius (*dhanu*). This is the start of the zodiacal 'month' of *dhanu* known as *dhanurmāsam*. Dhanu month is considered sacred to Vishnu. In the same way that a person who dies during the lunar month of *kārtika*, sacred to Siva, is said to go directly to *kailāsa*, Siva's heaven, a person dying during *dhanurmāsam* goes directly to *vaikunṭham*, Vishnu's heaven. The term *nelaganṭa* ('month bell') refers to the ringing of a bell at the Yatapalem Rama temple every morning. Strictly speaking, the term *sankrānti* or *sankramānam* refers to the day on which the Sun enters a new zodiacal constellation. There are thus 12 *sankrāntis* of each year. *Dhanu sankrānti* is the beginning of *nelaganṭa* and is followed by *makara sankrānti* (*makara*, 'Capricorn') which is the day of the festival known simply by the designation 'Sankranti'. In 1970, *dhanu sankrānti* fell on the sixteenth of December which was *caviti*, the fourth and least auspicious day of the lunar fortnight. To avoid starting on the unlucky day of *caviti*, *nelaganṭa* was begun on the fifteenth.

Nelaganṭa begins with a morning *pūja* at the Rama temple. First, the Jangam *pūjāri* puts new strings of mango leaves (*tōranam*, 'festoon of leaves') over the temple doorways, freshly cow-dungs the temple platform, and applies elaborate auspicious *muggu* diagrams on it.[6] Then several village Barbers and a Jangam begin drumming, each on their own distinctive drums. The Jangam *pūjāri* performs *pūja* to Rama by breaking a coconut and lighting an oil lamp and incense. He lights a camphor flame (*hārati*) as he rings a bell. Bystanders do a *daṇḍam* gesture of salute to the flame and later receive *prasādam* from the offerings. This early morning *pūja* with its drumming and bell-ringing[7] recurs daily until Sankranti day. A fresh series of *muggu* diagrams is applied each time.

Another feature of the *nelaganṭa* period is a morning *bhajana* procession in which lively devotional hymns are sung by Gavara men to the accompaniment of finger cymbals and a mridangam-type drum (*maddili*). The

frequency of mornings with such *bhajana* processions increases with the approach of Sankranti. It is done mainly on the last few days before Sankranti as anticipation grows and preparations for the festival quicken. Gavara *bhajana* singers make house-to-house rounds early in the morning, hence the term *mēlukolupu* ('waking up') for this activity. They carry a picture of Rama and collect oil and money-donations for the Yatapalem Rama temple—from the housewives who come to do *pūja* to the picture. The housewives' offerings also include incense, fruit, and a camphor flame.

In addition, there is a ceremony called *tolivaram*, 'first day', that takes place on the first Saturday in *dhanu* month, i.e. since the inception of *nelaganṭa*. In it housewives perform a *pūja* at their household shrine to offer the first rice of the new harvest. Rice which was cut in the first rice harvest ceremony is used to cook the main item offered, the sweetened rice pudding made with jaggery, called *paramannam* (or *jāva*). Turmeric and vermillion are distributed to auspicious women who apply it to their foreheads. Special *pūjas* are performed at the household shrine on all subsequent Saturdays prior to Sankranti.

Other activities associated with Sankranti also take place in this month, the start of the auspicious half of the year. It is a time of renewal and refurbishment during which houses are freshly whitewashed and decorated with red earth and white *muggu* patterns, new cooking utensils are bought, and new clothing is purchased (to be offered at the household shrine to the ancestors on Sankranti before being worn).

At the end of the *nelaganṭa* period come the three principal days of the festival, often referred to collectively as Sankranti. These days have their own names—*bhōgi*, *sankrānti*, and *kanumu*. Their timing is determined by the astrological almanac that tells which day the Sun enters the zodiacal constellation of Capricorn and commences its apparent northerly movement along the horizon.[8] For the previous six months the Sun has been rising in successively more southerly positions. An alternative Telugu term for the festival day of *sankrānti* proper is *pedda paṇḍuga*, the 'big' or 'great festival.'

The special activity on the first day, *bhōgi*, is the taking of baths. Before sunrise, villagers drink a purge, *bhōgi cēḍu*, and bathe. This bath is said to enable children to grow and stay healthy. People huddle around fires, *bhōgi manṭa*, made of newly cut palmyra leaves to warm them up after their baths. There follow the typical activities of a day in the *nelaganṭa* period. Gavara *bhajana* singers go around the village performing *mēlukolupu*, stopping from house to house for housewives to present offerings to the picture of Rama. There is a morning *pūja* at the Rama temple with drumming by Barbers and the Jangam *pūjāri*. During the rest of the day

many relatives arrive, particularly daughters who have married out of the village. Only those who have been married a short time are accompanied by their husbands. In the evening there is a *bhajana* at the Rama temple attended by some twenty males, mainly Gavaras but also members of the Carpenter and Jangam castes.

Activities on the following day, Sankranti, are marked by the theme of merit-making, generosity and the payment of *pūja* tributes to ancestors. First a *mēlukolupu* group of Gavara *bhajana* singers goes to Aripaka and Mallolla Pakalu to collect *pūja* offerings for the Yatapalem Rama temple. Among the castes that give donations in Aripaka are the Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis. There follows a morning *pūja* at the Yatapalem Rama temple.

The next major activity for Gavaras is an elaborate *pūja* at their house shrines (*dēvuḍu mūla*, 'god corner'). Every housewife draws unusually complex *muggu* patterns in rice flour on an area in front of her house which she has specially prepared with a purifying wash of cow-dung water. Then a *pūja* is performed at the house shrine in honour of the household ancestors. The array of items offered in the *pūja* remains at the household shrine until the following day except for three offering plates of food. Family members eat their midday meals from these as a sort of *prasādam*. Families whose sub-clan in the past year has experienced the death of a member who has not yet been 'installed' in the house shrine are prohibited from performing this *pūja*.

Many different kinds of items are considered essential to this *pūja* to family ancestors. New articles of clothing, both men's and women's, are smeared on their corners with turmeric and placed at the shrine. Three turmeric wads with vermillion dots on top, *moddulu*, sitting on a strip of banana leaf are placed on one of the steps of the shrine. An oil lamp is made out of a brass vessel and is placed respectfully on a layer of husked uncooked rice[9] also on one of the steps of the shrine. This lamp's flame is kept burning for three days. Incense of the *sambrāni* variety is burnt and a piece of camphor is lit to make *hārati*. Branches of tulasi are placed at the shrine as are raw fruits and vegetables in season such as aubergines, yams (*karra dumpa*), beans, sugar-cane, bananas, and coconut. Cooked preparations such as jaggery and fried millet confections (*būrelu*) are also at the shrine. On the floor in front of this array are three banana-leaf plates each heaped with cooked new rice, a helping of dal, and *būrelu*.

Villagers consider that the ancestors honoured by these offerings at the household shrine are the deceased parents of a male house head as well as his father's parents. Beyond this, only agnatic relatives are honoured, though their names are not remembered. In the case of a male household head who either came into the village on an *illarakam* uxorilocal marriage

and whose wife has died and her mother has come to live with him, his wife's mother is the person who conducts a *pūja* to honour his wife's father. Both *bālapēraṇṭālu* and *pēraṇṭālu* are specially remembered in the Sankranti household shrine *pūjas* by Gavaras. Sometimes they are represented by a separate mark alongside the main turmeric- and vermillion-smeared panel on the wall forming the back of the shrine. These often resemble tridents, though in some cases they are represented by an additional turmeric panel. There is much idiosyncratic variation in the design of these which does not seem linked to family, clan, or caste.

Certain wealthier, important Gavara households employ a Brahman priest to conduct a worship of ancestors. The offerings in these Brahmanical ancestor *pūjas* are also made on three or five leaf plates but are of raw rather than cooked food. This is because the Brahman priest, usually the one from Subbavaram who is utilized for marriages, takes this as part of his payment for performing the ceremony. The Brahmanical ancestor *pūja* does not supplant the household shrine *pūja*, however. Rather, it is in addition to the household shrine ancestor *pūja*.

Castes other than Gavaras have somewhat different practices on this day. Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis conduct ancestor worship in the morning with the aid of a Brahman priest. Their household shrines, however, are only for deity worship and are never associated with family ancestors. This contrasts sharply with the usage of all the other castes in the village including the Carpenters. Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis also commemorate anniversaries of the actual day of death of their ancestors. This was almost unknown among other castes, though some Gavaras claimed to perform a death anniversary ceremony with a Brahman. These were the same half-dozen or so who held Brahmanical ceremonies on Sankranti as well. Numerous castes dependent upon the Gavaras have their main household shrine *pūjas* either in the evening, such as the Malas, or on the next day, such as the Barbers. Washermen have no *pūja* on either day and perform their ceremony of worshipping the tools of their occupation (done by most castes on *kanumu*) several weeks later.

For the rest of the day in the village, castes dependent upon or subordinate to the Gavaras go around begging. This activity gives the Gavaras the ability to perform virtuous acts (*puṇyam*) of charity through giving away some of their wealth. Malas of Aripaka and Yatapalem and Madigas of Yatapalem each have distinctive drumming and dance styles which they display while begging from house to house for husked raw rice. Barbers and Washermen are given a measure (*kuncam*) of unhusked rice as partial payment in kind by their employers. This payment of annual salary is known as *pedda jītam*, 'big salary.' Barbers, Washermen, Settigollu, and Weavers all go round begging for small hand-outs of uncooked rice and fried millet

confections (*būrelu*) from the Gavaras.

Another activity that always occurs on Sankranti day is the gathering of Gavara elders at the Yatapalem Rama temple. The Headman, Panchayat Vice-President, and prominent members of the Malla, Rapeti, and Saragadam clans as well as the most elderly men of other Gavara clans sit on a platform adjacent to the temple. A common topic of conversation among them is the state of the temple's finances. The temple is also the site of a *bhajana* in the evening.

The following day is *kanumu* the highlights of which are the worship of occupational implements and a fair. The first activity is the taking of Yatapalem's temple candelabrum to Kottapalem early in the morning for the collection of the annual temple levy. Every village Rama temple has its candelabrum, *bhajana ceṭṭu* (*bhajana*, 'religious hymn'; *ceṭṭu*, 'tree') which is moved about within and between villages acting as a kind of representative of Rama and of its home village.[10] This large brass candelabrum, topped with a *hamsa*, a mythical bird, is so named because of its multiple stems or branches each of which bears an oil lamp.

The Yatapalem temple candelabrum is taken to Kottapalem accompanied by the temple's Jangam *pūjāri*, a Washerman hitting a gong, and several prominent Gavara elders, particularly the Panchayat Vice-President. Other Gavaras arrive later to join the *bhajana* singing and it is not uncommon to hear strong complaints if Kottapalem residents feel insufficient numbers of high-ranking Gavara elders are in attendance. As the candelabrum approaches, areas are purified and prepared with *muggu* diagrams—a cross-hatch pattern on a cow-dunged circle—in front of selected houses. The candelabrum is placed down on these and the singing proceeds. Housewives of the neighbouring houses come to present their respects, doing *pūja* and *daṇḍam* gestures to the candelabrum, and pay their annual levy (*canda*) of 50 paise. This levy goes to the Yatapalem Rama temple. Residents of Kottapalem are not required to contribute to any other festival levy during the year.

The presence of the temple candelabrum in Kottapalem acts as though it were a statue of Rama, effectively giving *darśanam*—transferring beneficial influences by its presence and sight—via its movement through the streets of the settlement. The fact that it is like Rama also transforms the activity from appearing as though Gavaras are going begging from lower caste people. They are begging but the connotation is that they are subordinating themselves on behalf of Rama.[11] This turns their begging into an act of tribute. On their part, the inhabitants are also paying tribute, to Rama, to the Gavaras, to Yatapalem and its temple. And through these tributes, categorized as *puṇyam*, acts of virtuous charity, villagers believe the gods will act kindly toward them in the coming year.

Begging and charitable giving is also a major activity in Yatapalem on the morning of *kanumu*. The Jangam *pūjari* goes around the village begging. He rings his bell and blows on his conch-shell trumpet, stopping at houses of families which practise *pākruti* funerary rituals. At these, he chants in honour of the family ancestors. In return, he is presented with handfuls of husked uncooked rice. Harijans circulate in caste groups begging for cooked food. On occasion, Gavaras do not give it to them right away but rather emphasise their dependency by mildly taunting them and making them beg. Malas from Yatapalem and Aripaka, Madigas from Yatapalem and the neighbouring village of Bangarampalem (the latter come to the village to participate in joint festivities at Yatapalem in the afternoon fair) play on their distinctive drums—a large shallow disk-like drum for Madigas and a ceramic bowl with a drumhead type for Malas—performing dances to the beat. In addition, Barbers and others circulate in a less ordered fashion, soliciting baksheesh from likely donors in order to buy *sāra*, country rum.

In the late morning on *kanumu*, numerous castes perform tributes to the tools of their professions, which through the rituals are identified with their ancestors. Each caste performs its own set of ceremonies. Gavaras, for instance, do a *pūja* to their bullock carts and worship their cattle. They decorate their carts with whitewash or turmeric dots and lines and drip on it the blood of a chicken which they have sacrificed. They smear the horns of their cattle with oil and turmeric and place fried rice-flour confection rings on their horns. These rings are removed from the horns and eaten as *prasādam*. In addition, women of some households, often those with members named after the goddess Lakshmi, perform a *mahalakṣmi dēvata pūja* which entails the lighting of two lines of oil lamps (one with eleven and another with five), the placing of five turmeric wads with vermillion spots on them, three leaf plates with food, incense sticks, bananas, *būrelu*, a coconut and other raw food items along the west wall adjacent to the household shrine. On the west wall is a turmeric patch with three parallel vertical lines in vermillion.

Carpenters (members of the Kamsali caste) place their tools at their household shrines. They wash and decorate their household implements—grindstones and rice husking mortar—with *muggus* and vermillion dots. They put their hammers, chisels, anvils and other implements together on a *muggu* at the shrine and perform *pūja* to them—by applying turmeric and vermillion, placing offerings of tulasi leaves, breaking a coconut and pouring its milk on the tools and the *pūja* area, wafting incense, lighting a camphor flame, and doing *daṇḍam* gestures of salute. Each Carpenter household performs a similar *pūja* at the smithy of their nearby work area which is freshly spread with cow-dung water and

elaborately decorated with *muggu* designs. Small panels of turmeric with vermillion dots (*boṭlu*) are placed on the back wall of the smithy's hearth. Then a sacrificial chicken is washed with water and fed some of the sweet rice pudding (*paramannam*) offering at the household shrine. It is beheaded and its blood spilt on the tools at the household shrine and then outside on to the smithy. Household members next eat the meals that have been placed as offerings at the household shrine, thereby partaking as *prasādam* the food offered first to their ancestors. The Carpenters do not remove their tools from their household shrines until a ceremony seven days later.

The Oil Pressers (Telukula), perform *pūja* to their oil presses and draught bullocks. Notable features of this *pūja* include the application of a turmeric panel with vermillion horizontal lines and dots (similar to panels at household shrines) on the huge pestle of the oil press. Turmeric is also smeared on the legs of the bullocks. A string with a turmeric root tied to it is secured to the pestle and another to one of the bullock's horns. A chicken is sacrificed and its blood is put on the pestle, the vat-like mortar, and the pressing-shed roof.

Barbers (Mangalis) do a *pūja* to their tool boxes. The men of the Barber households place the boxes that hold their razors, scissors, mirror, and water cup together on an area in front of their houses that has been prepared with a *muggu*. The tool boxes have been decorated with smears of whitewash and vermillion. The Barbers perform a *pūja* to the boxes and sacrifice a chicken over them, placing its blood on each box. Every Barber immediately takes his box and places it at his household shrine where meals are next placed as offerings. Family members then make their meal of these food offerings.

Unlike other castes, the Washermen (Cakali) do not worship their work implements at the time of Sankranti or Kanumu. They do have such a ritual, known as *ballāla paṇḍuga*, 'festival of the beating stones', but it is performed several weeks later (not on any fixed date). This ceremony resembles other castes' worship of implements. They decorate the pots they boil clothes in and the stones they beat them dry on with whitewash and vermillion, touching them with the blood of a sacrificial chicken which is later cooked for a festival meal.

Weavers (Salis) and Settigollu (or Yatas) are castes which no longer practise their traditional occupations and have therefore discontinued worshipping the tools of their former crafts. In villages in which weaving is still a viable occupation, weavers perform a *pūja* to their looms. Weavers also have a special caste festival at Telugu New Year (*ugādi*) when they celebrate rituals in honour of their patron sage, Bhavana Rishi. The Settigollu abandoned traditional methods of toddy-tapping due to the prohibi-

tion of the production of spirits imposed long ago but later rescinded.

On the afternoon of *kanumu* day the villagers celebrate the Yatapalem Tirtham. This begins a cycle of fairs that lasts for three weeks into the beginning of February. The Yatapalem Tirtham exhibits most of the typical features of *tīrthams* in the area. First an invitation is sent to the elders of Bangarampalem, a predominantly Gavara neighbouring village. The actual letter of invitation is sent from one panchayat president to another though signed, 'the village elders' (*grāma yajamānulu*). At the site of the fair, in the square in front of the Yatapalem Rama temple, commercial stalls are set up. Next comes the ceremonial arrival and greeting of the guest village's candelabrum procession. The Bangarampalem Rama temple's candelabrum is taken in procession from that village by its villagers who wend their way along paths through the fields. The procession is accompanied by drummers of the Barber, Madiga and Jangam castes in addition to a Washerman who hits a gong with a stick. The Panchayat President of Aripaka Revenue Village, the Gavara of Mallolla Pakalu, welcomes the Bangarampalem procession with drummers from Yatapalem. He presents the Bangarampalem Panchayat President with pan (*killi*, betel leaf and areca nut) and performs a *pūja* to their temple candelabrum by breaking a coconut, lighting an oil lamp, placing offerings of bananas and coins, and lighting a camphor flame. The Bangarampalem candelabrum is then escorted to the Yatapalem Rama temple and set down next to the Yatapalem candelabrum.

Villagers gather in the square, excitedly showing off their new clothes which they have just removed from their household shrine offerings. Gavara elders sit on a mat at the temple observing the festivities somewhat aloof from the crowd. Among them are the Panchayat President, the Panchayat Vice-President, the Headman, the Sirsipalli Headman (a Rapeti clansman of Yatapalem and brother of the Panchayat Vice-President), and the Bangarampalem Panchayat President and Headman.

Among the activities that take place are an active *bhajana* around the temple candelabra. The singers, from both Yatapalem and Bangarampalem, incorporate dance-like movements as they sing while moving in a circle together accompanying themselves with finger cymbals (*talālu*), to the music of a man on a drum and one playing a harmonium. At some distance from the *bhajana* is an active cockfight (*kōḍi pandem*). Lively betting goes on in the crowded circle of men who form an improvised ring. Meanwhile, a stream of housewives, representing all castes from Komatis to Madigas, arrives at the temple to present offerings to Rama. And along the sides of the square and the main street leading up to it villagers patronise market stalls selling such items as balloons, red toy sunglasses, tea, sweets, cigars, betel nut, vegetables, and fruit.[12] In larger *tīrthams*, gambling stalls are prominent with roulette-type canvas game boards painted with pictures of

animals that are operated with dice or cards. In such larger *tīrthams* rent for these stalls and gambling concessions is paid to the village.

The fair ends around sunset. The visiting village's candelabrum departs in a procession with drumming, followed by the departure of the other revellers who return home for dinner. The day's activities do not end here, however. In the evening, after villagers have their meals, there is a *bhajana* with the Yatapalem temple candelabrum in the Settigollu quarter of Yatapalem. Just as in the morning when the candelabrum was taken to Kottapalem, an annual levy of 50 paise is collected from each Settigollu household for the village Rama temple.

There follows on subsequent days a cycle of *tīrthams* in nearby villages. The Yatapalem temple candelabrum is officially sent to eleven of these (see Table 29). Individual villagers might attend any or all of these and additional ones in villages where they have relatives. Apart from those at which attendance is important because of the official visit by the village's temple candelabrum, the kind of entertainment being offered often influences people's decisions. The greatest lure for big crowds is the staging of dramas, *ḍrāmālu*.

Throughout the period of fairs, handbills on brightly coloured paper that invite the public to village fairs with dramas are widely circulated via relatives and friends or at markets and along bus routes. In addition to offering *bhajanas*, stick-twirling displays, stick-hitting dances, and bullock cart races with prizes of gold medals, they proclaim the day, date, and time of well-known dramas, often listing the cast of characters with actors' names.

Villages which are usually the scenes of the most heavily attended and popular all-night dramas tend to have wealthy individual patrons who stake claims to status in their village and the entire region by sparing no expense to sponsor troupes of highly skilled actors from as far away as Vijayawada.[13] Gotivada, located between Aripaka Revenue Village and Subbavaram, is the site of one of the most popular *tīrthams* in the immediate vicinity of the village. There, the president of the regional panchayat heads (the Panchayat Samiti Block President), a Kapu and owner of a local inter-city bus, annually sponsors a series of entertainments at the site of a monument in honour of his mother, who died an auspicious woman, and his father. There the entertainment consists of a *burra katha* (see Table 29), story-telling by a troupe of two men and one woman who accompany themselves on a drum with a string attached to the underside of its head and a stringed instrument; a *vīdhināṭakam*, an old form of traditional story apparently declining in popularity and only popular among older men, performed by three men and a boy who enact tales, such as *Satyabhāmakalapam* that tells of rivalry between Krishna's wives,

TABLE 29 : THE TIRTHAM CYCLE

Date (1971)	*Host village (and its dominant caste)*	*Villages participating with temple-candelabrum*	*Deity associated with the fair's venue*	*Notable features of this fair*
15 Jan.	Yatapalem (G)	Y, B	Rāma	Small scale, no night entertainment
16 Jan.	Bangarampalem (G)	Y, B, Ad, RA	Rāma	Night-long operatic drama : *Bālanāgamma*
18 Jan.	Yatapalem/Mallola Pakalu (G)	Y, B	Rāvalamma (*grāmadēvata*)	No drama, special duties of Yatapalem and Kottapalem Yatas, Surisetti clan (Gavaras)
*19 Jan.	Bhogapuram (G)	(Widely attended by its neighbouring villages) Y	*pēraṇṭālu* shrine to deceased parents of Headman	Famous for its dramas; hires well-known actors at cost of thousands (chief patron: Headman) Drama: *Gayōpākhyānam*
21 Jan.	Aripaka	Y, A	Rāma	No drama
22 Jan.	Gali-Bhimavaram (K)	Y, Gt	Rāma	No drama
23 Jan.	Tekkalapalem (V)	Y, RA, T, V, N	Durgalamma (*grāmadēvata*)	Large scale and popular. Drama: *Kurukṣetram*
24 Jan.	Lagisettipalem (S)		Paiḍitalamma (*grāmadēvata*)	Very small scale
25 Jan.	Rayapuram-Agraharam (Go)	Y, RA, T (?)	Paradēśamma (*grāmadēvata*)	No drama

28 Jan.	Adduru (V)	Y, Ad, RA (plus others)	Gādēlamma (*grāmadēvata*)	Large scale, extensive market and gambling stalls, large cockfighting ring. Elaborate high quality drama: *Rāmānjanēya Yuddham* (audience of approximately 5,000)
*30 Jan.	Anakapalli-Gavarapalem (Gavara quarter)	Villagers from the entire surrounding region attend. Crowds of 100,000	Gairamma-Festival (*sambaram*)	15 huge floats with mythological scenes (people in drama costume) partially sponsored by political parties
3 Feb.	Tekkalapalem (V)	Y, T, (+?)	Bālasatyavamma (*bāla-pēraṇṭālu*)	Fairly large scale. Drama : *Lavakuśa* (*Uttara-Ramayanam*)
6 Feb.	Gotivada (K)	Y, Gt, T (plus numerous others)	Rāmayamma (*pēraṇṭālu*) shrine of parents of Panchayati Samiti Pres.	Largest of the village fairs; drama entertainment on two days, afternoon and all night. The elaborate arrangements provided under patronage of Pres. of Block Samiti. Dramas: *Srī Kṛsṇa Rāyabharam* (*burrakatha*), *Satyabhāmakalāpam* (*vīdhināṭakam*), *Virabhimanya* (*burrakatha*), (*Kurukṣētram* (drama)

Abbreviations : G—Gavara, K—Kapu, V—Velama, S—Settigollu, Go—Golla; Y—Yatapalem, B--Bangarampalem, Ad—Adduru, RA—Rayapuram Agraharam, A—Aripaka, Gt—Gotivada, T—Tekkalapalem, V—Vangali, N—Nainampalem.

*Events participated in by Gavaras of Yatapalem and Mallola Pakalu but not by the village as a whole.

with virtuoso singing and accompaniment on the *madilli* drum; and a *ḍrāma* of the variety encountered in *grama dēvata* festivals. In 1972, comic intermissions during the drama were provided by the famous witty comedian and recording star, the Dimili Thin Man (*dimili poḍugu maniṣi*).

As can be seen in Table 29 there is a fair hosted by the residents of Yatapalem and Mallolla Pakalu three days after the *tīrtham* at the Rama temple in Yatapalem. It is in honour of the *gramadēvata* Ravalamma at the site of her temple south of the road between Mallolla Pakalu and Aripaka. While many activities at this fair such as *bhajana*, market, cock-fight, and gambling are commonly associated with all *tīrthams*, there are certain features that are unique and relate to customs exclusively associated with this village goddess.

For the Ravalamma Fair certain Gavara families and clans have special duties. The Ravalamma temple is whitewashed by a Saragadam man whose paternal grandfather financed the construction of the temple building. The Surisetti clan of Gavaras expresses its special ties with Ravalamma by being responsible for paying the Madiga drummers and performing special *pūjas* to the brass horses of the goddess which are carried in procession by the Settigollu. The Settigollu of Kottapalem and Yatapalem jointly participate in this endeavour with four residents from each settlement carrying each of the brass horses which are mounted on wooden carrying poles. During the morning and early afternoon before the fair the Jangam *pūjāri* and Madiga drummers go about the village begging.

When it is time to initiate the fair, the horses of the goddess are removed from storage in the Yatapalem Rama temple, washed and worshipped and then taken in procession accompanied with drummers to the fairgrounds next to the Ravalamma temple. When they reach the temple the procession circumambulates it and *pūja* is performed to the goddess inside. The fair then takes place with Bangarampalem's temple candelabrum next to that of Yatapalem. Though many Aripaka residents attend the fair and participate in its activities, the Aripaka candelabrum is not present.

After the fair ends when it gets dark, the two temple candelabra make a number of politically significant stops along their return route. The Yatapalem candelabrum is taken to Mallolla Pakalu for *bhajana* singing in front of various houses, particularly the house of the Panchayat President, Malla Jogi Naidu. Only then does it return to Yatapalem. The Bangarampalem temple candelabrum is taken to the house in Yatapalem of the Gavara man of the Rapeti clan who holds the offices of Headman and Record Keeper of Sirsipalli, a Settigollu hamlet near Bangarampalem. Since Sirsipalli holds joint festival celebrations with the Gavara-dominated village of Bangarampalem and shares its Rama temple, the Bangarampalem temple candelabrum represents Sirsipalli as well. For this

reason it makes a special stop at the house of the Sirsipalli Headman. Similarly, at the end of the Aripaka *tīrtham* that takes place three days after the Ravalamma *tīrtham*, Yatapalem's candelabrum makes a stop at the house of a village office holder. The Yatapalem candelabrum which is set down beside the Aripaka candelabrum during the fair is taken to the house of the Village Record Keeper (*karnam*) before being returned to Yatapalem.

Commentary on Sankranti Rituals: Basic Symbolic Elements and their References to other Rituals

The techniques of *pūja* are those which we have encountered in other ritual contexts. Their repetition strengthens their validity and expands their range of multiple associations. For instance, we note that the use of turmeric and vermillion recurs in numerous contexts (e.g. to represent elders or dieties, or to consecrate offerings). We also observe the repetition of acts and concepts in *pūja*, such as the use of *muggu* diagrams; the use of the *daṇḍam* (*namaskāram*) salute; the offering of praise (*bhajana* songs); the lighting of incense, oil lamps, and camphor (*hārati*); and the eating of foods that have first been consecrated through being offered to deities or ancestors (the concept of *prasādam*). Processions of temple candelabra draw on the concept of *darśanam*, the transference of auspiciousness through sight or presence, which itself is part of a complex of ideas encountered in other rituals which employ the notion of the influence of sight. Concepts of time—the importance of beginnings and the power of stars and planets that 'rule' different times—are similarly reiterated in Sankranti as the beginning of the astrologically auspicious half of the year.

Another feature of the Sankranti rituals is the recurrence of sequences of three. While the number three does not seem to have particular significance in itself, its repetition evokes correspondences between rituals on numerous levels. The main Sankranti festival is tripartite, divided into three days: Bhogi, Sankranti, and Kanumu. So little takes place on Bhogi that it almost seems as though it exists only to give a three-day structure to the festival. The entire festival season can also be seen as a series of three (though this is not explicitly conceptualised as such by the villagers) : (1) the season of preliminaries (*nelaganṭa*), (2) the three focal days of Sankranti, and (3) the season of fairs. In the *pūjas* at the household shrines too, we find sequences or quantities of three: three horizontal vermillion lines on the turmeric panel, three wads of turmeric with vermillion dots on them (*moddulu*), three leaf plates of food offerings, three clockwise circlings of the offerings with a camphor flame (*hārati*) etc.

These tripartite structures suggest correspondences with life cycle rituals

and van Gennep's classic three stages of *rites de passage*, namely, separation, transition, and incorporation (van Gennep 1960 : 11). The marriage rituals are divided into three main days, and funerary rituals can be conceived of as three stages—the first concerned with the immediate disposal of the body, the second being the year-long transition into becoming an ancestor during which relatives are under the restrictions of death pollution, and the third achieved with the installation of an ancestor or relative into the household shrine.

This leads us to consider other types of cross references between rituals. For instance, as a worship of ancestors, Sankranti is actually part of individual households' and subclans' life cycle rituals. The evocation of the memory of deceased family members can be quite poignant at the time of the Sankranti *pūja* to the family ancestors. People, particularly women, become tearfully emotional when they recall and honour their departed parents, husbands, wives, and children.

At the time of the *pūja* at the household shrine, family *pēraṇṭālu* receive special attention by having separate marks in turmeric on the wall. This enhances the ideology of auspicious womanhood and ultimately a whole series of beliefs about female roles in society. The ideology of the *pēraṇṭālu* is further associated with Sankranti and the successful harvest through the distribution of turmeric and vermillion to *pēraṇṭālu* at the end of the first rice-cooking ceremony on *tolivaram*, the first Saturday after the beginning of *nelaganṭa*.

Pēraṇṭālu and *bālapēraṇṭālu* are further linked with Sankranti through their shrines being the venues of fairs in the post-Sankranti season. Village goddess temples are similarly sites of such fairs. A further similarity between Sankranti fairs and village goddess festivals is the performance of popular operatic dramas. Both appear in the ritual context of fulfilment at the conclusion of the main worship.

Agricultural rituals are intimately linked to Sankranti since the latter is an expression of the completion of the harvest. The first rice harvesting ceremony leads directly to the first rice-cooking ceremony which is an integral part of the pre-Sankranti season.

Symbolization of Hierarchy in Sankranti

We now turn to consider the way in which the Sankranti rituals embody an ideology of hierarchical authority in various aspects of social relations—relationships with ancestors (and hence, elders), political leaders, inferior castes, and superior castes.

The Sankranti rituals teach the lesson that well-being is closely associated with submission to elders (both living and deceased elders are referred to by the same term, *peddalu* 'elders', 'great ones', or 'big ones'). One

gives thanks to them for the successful completion of the harvest and gives them precedence in enjoying its fruits. One takes one's meals after they do, symbolically eating their leavings in the same idiom used to express hierarchy between people, such as between husband and wife. Even new items of clothing are first offered to them and Sankranti is the season when most new clothes are bought for the coming year.

In castes with hereditary occupations there is an additional identification of ancestors with well-being through their caste trade, which incontestably does derive from their ancestors. In the *pūjas* on Kanumu day, direct symbolic links are made between a caste's occupational implements and its members' household shrines. For instance, Carpenters put a shrine-like turmeric panel on their smithies and place all their moveable tools into the household shrine. Barbers do the same. The Oil Pressers, who cannot move their vats, apply a turmeric panel with horizontal vermillion lines on the pestle, identical with the panel on the back wall of their household shrines. Further links of hereditary occupations with ancestors are made by placing the blood of a sacrificial chicken both on the tools and at the household shrine, as is the practice for Carpenters and Barbers for instance. In addition, the meal made from this sacrificial chicken is eaten at the household shrine.

Political authority is expressed in a number of ways in the Sankranti celebrations. First, there is the ostensibly informal gathering of Gavara elders at the temple platform on Sankranti day, to discuss temple finances etc. This echoes the gatherings of elders on other major festival occasions. Their somewhat aloof presence is a testimonial of their being in control.[14] There are fewer opportunities for the active assertion of such authority during Sankranti since it does not have the large processions and emotionally charged crowds of the village goddess and Gairamma festivals. The post-Sankranti fairs are contexts for such authority to be in evidence, however. And sponsorships of dramas sometimes serve as important legitimators of status.

The movements of the temple candelabra are frequently modes for expressing political relationships. Yatapalem elders who go with the candelabrum to Kottapalem to exact the annual dues for the Yatapalem Rama temple are thereby asserting their paramountcy over its inhabitants. The invitation and taking of village temple candelabra is also an expression of political authority. It is noteworthy, in this respect, that invitations seem to have been sent primarily to the Panchayat President. It is difficult to assess whether this was because a new Headman had yet to be appointed after the death of the old one or whether it was an indication of the superior authority of the President as a representative leader of the village. This is a significant question since the post of Headman was much older

than the relatively recently introduced Panchayat system.

The temple candelabrum is involved in the expression of political relationships in one more way. When the temple candelabrum is brought to the house of a political office holder who lives in another section or settlement of the village, it is a sort of tribute to him, a public acknowledgement of his position. Thus, when the Yatapalem candelabrum is in Aripaka for the *tīrtham* it is specially taken to the house of the Village Record Keeper. When it goes to the Ravalamma Fair it makes a special stop in Mallolla Pakalu at the house of the Panchayat President. In a similar way, the Bangarampalem-Sirsipalli candelabrum is taken to the house of the Yatapalem Gavara who holds the official Sirsipalli Headmanship.

Castes dependent upon the Gavaras go about the village in stylised, institutionalised begging on Sankranti, Kanumu, and fair days (i.e. fairs held in one of the settlements of Aripaka Revenue Village: Yatapalem Tirtham, Aripaka Tirtham, Ravalamma Tirtham). Those who serve priestly functions, such as Jangams, are paid in uncooked foodstuffs while occupational and labour castes (Barbers, Washermen, Malas, Madigas) are given handouts in cooked food. Carpenters are notably absent from this begging since they consider themselves to be the highest caste. While some poorer Settigollu might go begging from Gavaras, the Malas and Madigas go begging from Settigollu. In addition to being a time of begging, Sankranti is also an occasion on which many service caste households receive part of their annual payment from their employers in the form of payments in kind. A final feature of the Sankranti festival that makes it an occasion for expressing the unequal relations between castes is the behaviour at fair-ground gambling stalls. Though it is not an intentional effect, farmers' conspicuous spending of cash cannot help but emphasise differences in wealth between castes. Amounts equivalent to a hired labourer's daily wages are flung down with abandon.

Symbolisation of Interdependence in the Sankranti Rituals

Interdependence is a recurrent theme and feature of the Sankranti rituals. It is particularly important in the social relations between the sexes, within and between castes, and between villages.

The interdependence of the sexes is most clearly evidenced in the indispensable role of women in performing the domestic *pūjas* and preparing food offerings. The *muggu* decorations in the courtyards and the *pūjas* at the household shrines are done exclusively by women. Even in the *pūjas* to occupational implements which are performed by men, wives frequently accompany and assist them.

Sankranti is also a time when married daughters return for a reunion

with their parents. Sons-in-law generally accompany them in the first or second year of their marriage. The convention of hospitality to the son-in-law is sometimes a source of tension. Popular magazines published in cities satirise the coming of the son-in-law at Sankranti in their cartoon section. In these, sons-in-law hint they want all sorts of costly things which the father-in-law cannot afford but is also not supposed to refuse. Such tensions, however, are not much pronounced in the village context. Rather, the festival is a time of family reunions with members who live outside the village.

The Sankranti worship of family ancestors is an occasion on which members of the pollution-sharing sub-clans identify with each other by virtue of their sharing prohibitions on doing *pūja* at their house shrines if one of their members has recently died and has not yet been placed among the ancestors. At another level, members of the same caste display unity with each other by synchronizing their various *pūjas*, whether household or occupational ones. It is a notable feature of Sankranti that different castes perform their *pūjas* at different times of the day and some even on different days. Furthermore, certain specialist castes (such as Barbers and Carpenters) do their occupational *pūjas* as a unit at the same time. For instance, the Barbers all put their tool boxes together in front of their houses. Only one chicken is sacrificed and its blood is dripped on all five of their tool boxes.

The entire Sankranti season is replete with occasions on which castes participate together in the ritual activities, for example the Jangams acting as *pūjāris*, the Barbers and Harijans (Malas and Madigas) drumming, the Washerman gong-beating, and the Settigollu carrying brass horses. Admittedly, only a small number of castes recurs in different contexts, namely Jangams, Barbers, Washermen, Settigollu, Malas, and Madigas. These are, with the exception of the Jangam who acts as a *pūjāri*, castes that are unquestionably inferior to the Gavaras and also, incidentally, among the castes that eat domestic pork. Castes higher or roughly equal to Gavaras have no special indispensable ritual role. Carpenters, whose caste status is ambiguous, are notably absent. Oil Pressers claim to be in a status not much lower than the Gavaras and are among the same castes that prohibit the eating of domestic pork.

Apart from their special ritual jobs, these dependent castes are prominent in house-to-house begging. While begging is an acknowledgement of inferior status, it also entails assumptions about interdependent obligations—that the welfare of poorer, dependent castes is considered to be the responsibility of the higher castes.

An expression of the interdependence of settlements can be discerned in the movement of *bhajana* groups and temple candelabra. The *mēlukolupu*

singers of Yatapalem go to Aripaka and Mallolla Pakalu on the morning of Sankranti day because they feel they are part of the same village. The maintenance of such contacts furthers the feeling of interconnection which would otherwise only remain on a theoretical plane. In a similar way, Kottapalem demonstrates its ties with Yatapalem by paying tribute to Yatapalem's temple candelabrum on Kanumu day.

The interdependence of neighbouring villages finds expression in the season of fairs. Invitations are sent between settlements and villages, for them to bring their temple candelabra and jointly participate in *bhajanas*. Thus, the movements of temple candelabra should be viewed as expressions of 'diplomatic relations' between villages. In the cycle of fairs, Yatapalem's temple candelabrum goes to Aripaka and six neighbouring villages (Bangarampalem, Adduru, Tekkalapalem, Rayapuram Agraharam, Gali-Bhimavaram, and Gotivada).

It is curious that there does not seem to be a principle of reciprocity since only Bangarampalem attends Yatapalem's fair. This is partially explained by the fact that Yatapalem's fair is held on a major festival day, Kanumu, while people in other villages still have their own celebrations to attend and relatives to entertain. Furthermore, the degree of participation by other villages is correlated with the scale of the fair. The scale of a fair depends on whether or not its inhabitants sponsor an all-night drama. Attendance is far higher when there is a drama on the agenda. Some villages are known for staging dramas of higher quality than others and attendance varies accordingly. The decisive factor in quality seems to be monetary expenditure, the ability to hire a professional troupe or at least professional lead players.

The apparent 'prestige' of a village's fair is correlated with wealth and expenditure. However, such expenditure is not necessarily correlated with overall village wealth. For example, Adduru, a Velama-dominated village, has poorer lands than Yatapalem and Aripaka, but its fair is far more widely attended. Rather, it depends on rich individuals who act as sponsors, such as the Headman of Bhogapuram or the Panchayati Samiti Block President in Gotivada. Information is not available on the financing of the Adduru fair. If it is not paid for by a single wealthy patron it is possible that the whole village is motivated to contribute in order to enhance their village's prestige. They might be particularly keen on this precisely because of the village's mediocre wealth and relative isolation between several hill ridges.

All of this still does not account for the fact that Yatapalem's temple candelabrum goes to Aripaka's fair but not vice versa. Here we must suspect caste status and settlement rivalries, though these are not otherwise overtly expressed.

MINOR ANNUAL FESTIVALS, AGRICULTURAL RITUALS, AND PRIVATE CALENDRICAL OBSERVANCES

Aside from the three major festival seasons which are closely linked to the agricultural rhythm, numerous minor festivals punctuate the year. These draw on and reinforce the symbols and ideologies we have already discussed, as well as adding nuances of their own. We shall now sketch these festivals to give some idea of their structure and content.

(i) *Ugādi and Kotta Amavasya*–Date : *caitra śuddha pāḍyami*[15] (March) This is the Telugu New Year but is not marked by any public ritual as such. Certain individual households prepare a special food, *ugādi paccadi*, 'Ugadi chutney', containing ingredients associated with the season, new mangoes and the first neem flowers. New mangoes are green and neem flowers are yellow. The Telugu word for chutney, *paccadi*, is related to the word *pacca* which refers to a colour category that embraces both green and yellow. Young rice leaves have a chartreuse colour which is distinctly on the border between English 'green' and 'yellow.'[16] *Paccadi* thus associates with the new and auspicious beginning of the year through the word *pacca* which means the greenness of young plants, and the golden yellowness of auspicious turmeric.

Kotta amavasya, literally 'the New Moon', the day after *ugādi*, is an important date in the reckoning of debts and contracts. It is common for people to say "I'll settle my debt with you by *kotta amavasya*". The employment of an annual basis field hand, *pālēru*, is also reckoned to begin on this date.

On the day after *kotta amavasya* there is the massive annual celebration of the Nukalamma festival in Anakapalli. This goddess is so renowned that many villagers from Yatapalem go to Anakapalli to participate in the festival, fulfilling a vow, or simply having *darśanam* and enjoying the festivities which include a parade of floats bearing tableaux of costumed people portraying mythological scenes. Synchronized with the Anakapalli Nukalamma festival are small-scale processions to temporarily erected palm-leaf shed shrines to Nukalamma, one in Yatapalem and another in Kottapalem. As in Anakapalli, it is a custom to carry sacrificial chickens out to the shrine on a shoulder yoke, *kāvaḍi*, a cross pole with a chicken and batch of neem leaves at either end.

(ii) *Śrī Rāma Navami* – Date : *caitra śuddha navami* (March-April) This celebration of the marriage of Rama and Sita falls nine (lunar) days after *kotta amavasya* on *navami* (the ninth lunar day). It is

celebrated in the Yatapalem Rama temple by a Brahman from Subbavaram who is hired for the day. He performs marriage rituals to the temple idols of Rama and Sita. The Carpenters supply a new sacred thread, *jandhyam*, for Rama and a wedding locket for Sita. (It is significant that Carpenters supply the sacred thread in the light of their own claim to Twice-Born status and their wearing of the sacred thread.) The Gavaras supply new clothing for the idols.

(iii) *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Aṣṭami* – Date: *śravaṇa bahula aṣṭami* (July-August)
This holiday celebrates the birthday of Krishna. A game is played in which there is a competition to catch a bundle in a sling holder, *uṭṭi*, which is hoisted and lowered between two poles. As a competing group approaches, others throw turmeric water at them to stop them retrieving it. The bundle contains offerings of grains, fruits, leaves, flowers, and fried confections.
The whole procedure is a re-enactment of a well-known episode from the childhood of Krishna. One of Krishna's mischievous pranks was to devise ways of stealing curds and butter from pots suspended from the roof beams in sling holders. Numerous popular pictures depict Krishna standing on a ladder or on the shoulders of friends trying to reach the butter pots.
The stylised competition of the *uṭḷa* game is optionally followed by an evening of entertainment. In 1971, many villagers celebrated by going to the cinema in Subbavaram, five miles away. In 1972, however, two well-to-do young Gavara farmers agreed to match each other in putting up money for an all-night drama performance. The drama they picked was *Satyahariścandra*, which had been staged in Yatapalem the year before at the Bandamma Festival.

(iv) *Vināyāka Caviti* – Date: *bhādrapada śuddha caviti* (August-September)
This festival, in honour of Ganapati,[17] is hardly celebrated in the village though it is highly popular in urban centres. Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis in Aripaka, the Komati family of Yatapalem, and the schools in both settlements celebrate this day with a *pūja* to an improvised idol or plaster of paris image of Ganapati, purchased in a town. The idol is placed on a layer of turmeric-smeared rice, echoing the treatment of pots of the village goddess or oil lamps lit on Sankranti in honour of ancestors. Offerings are made of incense, bananas, coconut, and an oil lamp. Then flowers and *tulasi* leaves are thrown on to the idol as a long list of the god's names is read from a book. At the end of the *pūja* a coconut is broken, its water poured on the idol, and a piece of camphor is lit. Then, *prāsadam* of the edible offering is distributed.

Though Vinayaka Caviti is primarily a school-children's holiday, this does not mean that the Gavara villagers neglect the worship of Vinayaka. Rather, their worship centres on the annual initiation of jaggery ovens and sugar-cane presses. At that time they make mud images of Vinayaka to which they perform *pūja*. A curious feature of these mud images is the convention of depicting Vinayaka with exaggerated genitals. This practice becomes intelligible in the light of the overtly obscene or sexual nature of certain images (*diṣṭi bommalu*) that are placed in fields or drawn on trees near animal sheds in order to attract and absorb jealous glances, *diṣṭi*, 'evil eye.' The Vinayaka image placed at the base of the smoke-stack of the jaggery oven is thus not only intended to help in the overcoming of obstacles and ensuring success, but also to ward off injurious jealous glances.

(v) *Dīpāvali* (also called *dīpāvali amavasya*) – Date: *aśvayūja amavasya* (September-October)

This festival of lights, deriving its name from *dīpam* ('oil lamp'), has associations with the ripening crops of sugar-cane and rice. It also heralds the onset of the lunar month of *kārtika*, sacred to Siva. A *pūja* is performed in the evening to the ancestors in each household shrine. Then sugar-cane stalks are wrapped with wicks. These are lit at the household shrine and taken out of doors where family groups, such as clansmen residing in the same neighbourhood, gather in semicircles to hold them upright as fireworks and crackers are set off. After a while the sugar-cane poles are dropped and all say, "*dubbu, dubbu, dīpālamavasya, amavasya veḷḷi, aidu rōjulu nāgula caviti*" "rice stalks, rice stalks, five days after the new moon of Dipavali comes Nagula Caviti"). Thus Dipavali leads into the next festival, Nāgula Caviti.

(vi) *Nāgula Caviti* – Date: *kārtika caviti* (September-October)

Five (lunar) days after Dipavali comes *nāgula caviti*, the worship of cobras, *nāgupāmu*. Cobras are accorded the honour of this worship in order to flatter and placate them. This is in line with the principle we have observed elsewhere that one worships those things which have the power to affect one's well-being. The poisonous bite of the cobra is widely feared, particularly in this season when the crops stand high in the fields, concealing the presence of snakes. In addition, cobras have an important place in Hindu mythology and iconography.

Nāgula Caviti is begun with an early morning bath and fast, *upavāsam*. Men apply forehead markings of various kinds. For the Gavaras these are *nāmam* marks, a white 'V' or 'U' shape with a

vertical red line in the middle. These are modelled on the Vaishnavite sectarian mark but have no sectarian significance for the villagers. They are merely considered as having a connotation of auspiciousness. Other castes tend to stylize their forehead marks differently. Settigollu apply their *nāmams* in white lines only. Carpenters smear sandalwood paste on their forehead and apply a vermillion dot in the middle; Jangams smear cowdung ash (*vibhūti*, a Saivite symbol) on their foreheads. Even among the Gavaras there are variations. One was observed to make a 'Sun and Moon mark,' a crescent with a dot in the centre.

Family groups then proceed out of the village to large termite mounds to perform the *pūja*. These family groups are not rigidly defined but tend to be closely related subclansmen who live or work together. There is a tendency for families who share field hut areas (*kallam*), who are not necessarily patrilineally related, to join in such *pūja* groups.

The hollow interiors of the termite mounds are believed to be the favourite abodes of cobras. Thus, the *pūja* is performed by pouring offerings of milk and placing whole raw eggs into holes in the mounds. Other items placed on to the termite mounds are: seasonal flowers (*gobbi puvvulu, tangiḍi puvvulu*), and fruits, centres of unripe palmyra fruits (*tāṭi ginjalu*), and leaves of tulasi (sweet basil) along with turmeric, vermillion, and schematic *muggu* diagrams. A special cloth, *nāgula panci*, white with a red check (and smeared on its corners with turmeric), is put down and then taken back after a *danḍam* gesture has been done to it on the termite mound. These red-checked cloths are later worn by men working in the fields and are a kind of testimonial to snakes who might see them that they have been respectfully worshipped on *Nāgula Caviti*. Fireworks are set off as each person, including each child, presents his or her own offerings and does a *danḍam* gesture of salute.

The *pūja* technique reflects a pattern observed in other ritual contexts with repetitions of sequences of three. Three turmeric wads are offered, each with a vermillion dot (*boṭṭu*). Each person pours the milk offering three times into the hole of the termite mound. Some vary this procedure by pouring into three different holes.

After the *pūja*, the women of the village, particularly young unmarried or newly married girls, go to bathe in a natural pool in a nearby rocky hillside. No men are allowed there at that time. On their way back to the village the women run on the main road mischievously stopping buses and laughing merrily. The notion that bathing on particular festivals is beneficial for growing children is

encountered in wedding rituals, processions to village goddess temples (children are held in the water poured over people possessed by the goddess) and baths on the morning of *bhōgi* in Sankranti. In the bathing at the *boḍlabāyi* hillside pool on *Nāgula Caviti* there is the related notion that women's health and fertility is fostered by this bath.

In the afternoon, Malas and Madigas go begging in the village from house to house. Meanwhile, many Gavara elders gather and sit together at the Rama temple while young men do *ciratalu* dances (which are simultaneously part of the entertainment of Gairamma whose festival is in progress). In the evening there is more *ciratalu* dancing and a *bhajana*. Large numbers of villagers celebrate by treating themselves to a cinema in Subbavaram.

(vii) *Kārtika Sōmavaram* – Date : Mondays in *kārtika* month (October-November).

As part of the rituals honouring Siva during *kārtika* month, special *pūjas* are performed on Mondays, a day particularly sacred to him. Before sunrise, on the first Monday, a group of ten or so unmarried girls make floating lights, from banana-stalk segments decorated with turmeric and vermillion, and launch them on the waters of a village tank. They cheer "Govinda, Govinda"[18] and return to the village singing songs about Rama and Sita. They say that their object is *puṇyam*, 'merit' or general well-being, implying that they hope to have many children and become *pēraṇṭālu*, auspicious wives with their husbands outliving them.

Later in the morning, villagers of both sexes bathe, and maintaining a fast, they go to perform *pūja* and have *darśanam* at a Siva temple a few kilometres westwards on the main road in the direction of Bangarampalem and Adduru. In recent years some villagers have alternately been going to the *bālapēraṇṭālu* temple of Isvaramma in the village of Paidampeta some fifteen kilometres away.

The Siva temple, grandly named Sri Somalingesvara Svami Devasthanam, is commonly referred to by the nickname of the turning in at the road at which it is situated, *lingāla tiruguḍu* 'Lingam corner.' It is a small-scale affair as far as Brahmanical temples go. It maintains a resident Brahman who has a working knowledge of temple rituals and is supported by donations from villagers in surrounding settlements (among whom the Bangarampalem Gavaras are the most prominent). Another source of its finances is the sale of flower garlands to passing bus drivers, for placing on the religious pictures inside the front of their buses. The temple was said to have been founded by a bus driver who averted an accident nearby and

erected the temple out of gratitude. The recent growth in popularity of the Isvaramma *bālapēranṭālu* temple has eroded the Somalingesvara Siva temple's income, particularly on Kartika Mondays, to the dismay of the Brahman priest and his employees.

(viii) *Śīvarātri* or *Mahāśivarātri*–Date : *māgha bahula caturdaśi* (February) This is a single-day festival in honour of Siva. (*śīvarātri* means 'Siva night'.) The principal feature of the holiday is the requirement of remaining awake all night long, the so-called *jāgarālu*, 'vigil.' This vigil is customarily performed at a Siva temple or shrine. Pilgrimages to rather distant temples (50-60 kilometres) to have *darśanam* and perform the vigil take place on a massive regional scale. For Yatapalem inhabitants, one of the favourite temples is the Sanyasi temple at Dharmavaram near the town of Srungavarapukota. At such temples all-night entertainment is provided in order to help people stay awake. Even at the modest temple of Somalingesvara Svami at Lingala Tirugudu a *Vīdhināṭakam* troupe is provided which performs *Satyabhāmakalāpam*, a story of Krishna and his feuding wives.

Agricultural Rituals

Rituals centring on agricultural operations repeat the basic ideology and symbols which we have encountered in other contexts. For instance, they mark the initiation of important undertakings at astrologically auspicious times, they worship the things which have the ability to influence personal well-being, and their basic content is the performance of *pūja*. They also employ many of the same symbols, such as turmeric, vermillion, incense, offerings and animal sacrifice. We have already noted how the major festivals, of village goddesses, Gairamma, and Sankranti contain numerous connections with or references to the agricultural cycle. For instance, first rice-harvesting (*pīdantuṭa*) and first rice-cooking (on the first Saturday in *nelaganṭa*) are integral parts of the Sankranti festival. Similarly, we find numerous other cross-references in agricultural rituals. They tie in with worship at the household shrine, the ideology of the auspicious wife, the symbolism of turmeric and vermillion, and astrological categories of time reckoning.

(i) *Rain-bringing rituals* – (late April to early June)
There are two varieties of rain-bringing ritual. The first is a minor ritual in which several boys about ten years old (of the Washermen, Barber, and Settigollu castes) go around the village with a frog tied in a handkerchief. This is suspended from the middle of a stick held horizontally between two boys. As they go

from house to house begging they get a small quantity of uncooked rice, some jaggery, and a few small coins. When they stop in front of a house, a small pot of water is poured over them and the frog. The boys then chant : *kappa kappa nīlāla, kappa kappa nīlāla, kaḍava niṇḍa dōmalu, morrō vāna dēmuḍa,* "frog, frog, waters; frog, frog, waters; a pot full of mosquitoes; oh god, cry for rain !" This is all done in a spirit of playfulness and frivolity.

However, when there is deep anxiety over the arrival of the rains more serious ritual initiatives are undertaken. In 1972 there was a freak rainstorm before the monsoon was due. Many shrubs suddenly burst into bloom only to wither in the unusually harsh heat wave that followed. Midday temperatures reached 45°C[19] and stayed in the low 40s for well over a weak. This prompted the villagers of Yatapalem to hold an *ēkāham*, non-stop *bhajana* and chanting for twenty-four hours at the Rama temple on an auspicious *ēkādaśi* day (specifically, *vaiśakha bahula ēākdaśi*). This was about a week before the monsoon customarily arrives in mid-June.

Immediately after the completion of the *ēkāham*, the Gavaras held a *santarpaṇam*, 'feeding of the poor.'[20] For this purpose, Rs. 160 had been collected by means of a levy on Gavara households. In front of the Rama temple some ninety-seven persons from Aripaka Revenue Village were given meals which were cooked by Gavaras. The following castes participated—from Yatapalem: Weavers, Oil Pressers, Barbers, Washermen, Settigollu, Malas, Madigas; from Kottapalem: Settigollu; and from Aripaka: Malas. In addition, there were some Settigollu from a Settigollu satellite settlement of Bangarampalem.

The *santarpaṇam* was one of the few instances of a public meal in which interdining principles were demonstrated. Castes that partook of food cooked by the Gavaras were clearly admitting their inferiority. Interestingly, the lines of diners were not very strictly divided by sex and caste. There were cases of Oil Pressers and Barbers, Weavers and Washermen eating side by side. Harijans were in all cases in separate rows though, within these, Malas and Madigas ate side by side, nonetheless in clusters rather than interspersed.

The mechanism underlying the *santarpaṇam* is the notion of *puṇyam*, 'merit' (a sort of good deed, credit with god for one's future benefit, an auspicious act, etc.). The idea is that by praising Rama—allegedly 150,000 mantrams had been read at the *ēkāham*—and by giving charitable donations of food to 'the poor' and dependents, they would gain 'credit' with Rama which he would repay by

bringing plentiful rains.
We have discussed earlier how the subsequent failure of rain to arrive prompted explanations that menstruating women had attended and thus spoilt the *puṇyam*, 'merit', by this act of disrespect. Rama would overlook this only if further offerings would be made, such as the breaking of fifty coconuts at the temple.
The notion that benefits can be obtained from gods by self-discipline (e.g. *tapas*, self-mortifying meditation on the name or formula of praise for a god) and chanting *mantras* is a common theme in popular stories and cinemas of Hindu mythology. It is not an uncommon occurrence for a demon king or ascetic to gain power (e.g. a god's grant of a boon, *varam*) regardless of the use to which he intends to put this power. Efficacy derives from appropriate ritual actions and formulae which automatically generate power, and not merely from pesonal good intentions.
A further implication of the *santarpaṇam* 'feeding of the poor' is that well-being is linked to the fulfilment of hierarchical obligations between castes. When men fulfil their obligation to be benevolent to dependent castes (the moral code of interdependence) this also generates *puṇyam* 'merit' which influences god to be benevolent similarly toward farmers and bring them good rains. The ritual with the frogs and the ritual of feeding the poor thus exhibit a basic similarity. In both there is the underlying notion that people can manipulate cosmic events and deities (e.g. Rama's bringing of rain and stopping a heatwave) through their proper inter-relations with their immediate neighbours and environment. The upholding of social morality brings social well-being since prosperity and health result from the creation of *puṇyam*, acts which embody the ideals of hierarchy (respect) and interdependence (mutual, though not symmetrical, obligations).

(ii) *First sowing of rice* – (end of first week in July)
In the description of the main steps in the first-sowing ritual that follows, note the repetition of elements we have already encountered: *pūja* at the household shrine, the use of turmeric and vermillion, charitable donations to 'the poor' for merit (*puṇyam*), the repetition of series of three, and references to auspicious wives (*pēraṇṭālu*).
The first step is the consecration of the seed rice at the household shrine. For this purpose a *pūja* is performed on a Saturday, the day of the week sacred to Vishnu and Venkatesvara, one of his manifestations. Some seed rice is ground into flour and combined with jaggery and dal to make *āradi*, the special offering used

in this *pūja*. Seed rice is placed at the household shrine. Then a three-wick oil lamp is lit and a turmeric wad with a vermillion spot is placed on it. The *āradi* preparation is offered on a leaf plate. Then incense sticks are lit and a *daṇḍam* salute is done to the shrine area with all the *pūja* items. The *āradi* is then taken and eaten as *prasādam*.

Next comes the actual ceremony of the first sowing, the celebration of which is on a different day, determined by advice in the astrological almanac. Seed is placed in a basket into which turmeric is mixed. A panel in turmeric paste is made on one side of the basket and three vermillion dots are applied to it. As the seed is being taken to the field, an auspicious wife comes down the road towards the sower. This has been pre-arranged to ensure the beneficial effects of such an auspicious sight. It is consistent with the beliefs, encountered in other contexts, that auspicious beginnings are important for successful undertakings and that auspiciousness can be transferred by means of sight. In addition, portions of the seed rice are given to 'poor people' who come begging. This generates *puṇyam*, much the same as giving food to the poor at a *santarpaṇam*, which is expected to enhance the well-being and fecundity of the crop.

At the field selected for the ceremony, men perform *pūja*. A mound of earth is made in the middle of the field. On this is put three wads of turmeric with vermillion dots on top of them, three bits of tamarind, and three pieces of jaggery. Near this mound some seed rice is put down in three small piles. Those attending the *pūja* offer a *daṇḍam* gesture of salute to the offerings. Later they remarked that, at the time, they thought "let the rice grow well this year." Men put vermillion powder on their foreheads as is customary at the end of *pūjas*. It is a visible sign of their having performed the *pūja* and is somewhat akin to the taking of *prasādam*. Auspicious wives who are present put turmeric and vermillion on their foreheads. Then all eat the pieces of jaggery as *prasādam*. After this, the actual sowing begins with a man broadcasting seed from a rice winnow (*cēṭa*) with his right hand.

When explanations were elicited about the mound of earth and its offerings, villagers said that it represents god, *dēvuḍu*. They would not name any specific god, however, and indicated it meant all gods in general.[21] They also commented on the ability of abstract items to represent god by pointing to the similarity with the worship of Ganapati (Vighnesvara or Vinayaka) at the beginning of all Brahmanical rituals. It is only a turmeric and vermillion wad but

nevertheless 'becomes' Ganapati in the *pūja*.

(iii) *Transplanting of rice seedlings* – (end of third week in July)

In the northeast corner of a field, a man initiates the first transplanting (*uḍupu*) with a *pūja* before women carry on with the job. We note again the role of the number three and its multiples, and the use of turmeric and vermillion. *Neraḍi* branches have cross-associations with the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* in which they are prominent, and the ceremonial marriage pole (*rāta*), to which they are tied. The *cinna nēpālam* tree that is planted is notable for being tenaciously hardy, quick growing, and having a milky sap—desirable or auspicious qualities for rice. The sweet-smelling tulasi is associated with auspicious wives, and occurs in *pūjas* at household shrines and numerous other rituals in a wide variety of auspicious contexts. The use of *unḍrālu*, millet confections, echoes the Gairamma festival in which Nandi is garlanded with a string of *unḍrālu*. As will be seen, though this is a fairly minor ritual, it is replete with complex associations and cross-references with a wide variety of other rituals.

A man of the household performs the *pūja*. In the mud in the northeast corner of a flooded rice field, he places the following items : three branches of *neraḍi*, a sapling of *cinna nēpālām*, and branches of tulasi. He also places pieces of tamarind and jaggery (ingredients encountered in the first-sowing ritual), and three confections made of millet (*cōḍi*) flour on a banana leaf at the *pūja* site. These confections are not the usual *unḍrālu* balls but are in the shape of disks with an 'X' made of two crossed strips of dough laid on top. These three marked disks are said to represent a grain bin (*gādi*), a sickle (*nāgali*), and a basket (*gampa*)—all items associated with the harvest. The first transplanting is performed next. The man plants nine bunches of seedlings in the field near the *pūja* items. Then *prasādam* is distributed consisting of millet confections (*unḍrālu*) that have been brought for this purpose. This ends the *pūja* and the women begin the systematic transplantation of rice seedlings as the men bring them in bundles from the seed beds.

The transplanting is customarily carried out mainly by women who stand in a line with their saris tucked up, singing lively rice-transplanting songs as they work.

(iv) *Field sacrifices* – Dates : *bhādrapada amavasya, citta kārte* (August-September)

There are several varieties of field sacrifices at various stages during the agricultural season. The most widespread is the sacrifice of a chicken to the field and crops at *bhādrapada amavasya*. (In

1971 this fell on 19 September.) Another type is a goat sacrifice to Ravalamma by the Malla clan after their millet (*ganṭi*) crop is in. This takes place on a Tuesday, the day sacred to Ravalamma. (In 1971 it was on 28 September.) The latter sacrifice represented a whole clan's fulfilment of a vow to a goddess whose temple stands on their lands. In contrast, the *bhādrapada amavasya* sacrifice is performed by individual households without regard to clan or caste affiliation.

A third type of sacrifice concerning crops is the *citta bali* (*bali*, 'sacrifice') around the time of *citta kārte*. (In 1971 *citta kārte* fell on 11 October but the sacrifice was put off until 14 October which was an *ēkādaṣi* day.) The *citta bali* coincides with the period of greatest threat to the standing crop from insects and diseases. Theoretically this sacrifice should be performed at each of the three main village tanks by the farmers whose land is irrigated by them. In practice, only the well-to-do Malla clan performed this sacrifice, at the tank which waters most of their lands.

Let us now examine the ritual of the *bhādrapada amavasya* field sacrifice in more detail. The timing of this sacrifice is by lunar reckoning, that is, on the last day of the lunar month of *bhādrapada*. Hence, it shifts relative to the solar and Gregorian calendar from year to year. In contrast, the other variety of field sacrifice is reckoned according to *kārte*, solar divisions which vary only a day or so from year to year.

A young man of a family, holding a sacrificial chicken, runs around a field clockwise, the usual direction for circumambulation of sacred places which keeps the auspicious right-hand side of the body towards the field. As he circumambulates he shouts, "*poli, poli*,"[22] just as in the first rice harvesting ritual, *pīdantuṭa*. The chicken is then beheaded with a sickle and its blood is dripped on the field and some of the growing rice, also similar to the *pīdantuṭa* ritual. Afterwards the chicken is used in a meal prepared for the family.

(v) *Citta bali: pre-rice-harvest sacrifice* – Date: *citta kārte* (mid-October)

A goat is sacrificed in Mallolla Pakalu and its blood is carefully collected and mixed with turmeric-smeared rice and *balusu* leaves. The resulting mixture is cooked and distributed to all farmers with land irrigated by the *kotta ceruvu*, 'new tank', a tank near Mallolla Pakalu. They go and spread the mixture in each of their fields. Simultaneously, another preparation is made from the sacrificial blood, a sort of black pudding called *nalla*, 'black'. This is made by cooking the blood with tamarind, salt, and chillies. When it

reaches a sticky consistency and cools into a hardened mass it is sliced and distributed as *prasādam* to the assembled participants in the sacrifice.

(vi) *Ravalamma Mokku: Vow-Fulfilling Sacrifice*
This takes place on a Tuesday, the day sacred to Ravalamma. It is the fulfilment of an annual vow by the Malla clan to sacrifice a goat to Ravalamma upon the successful completion of their millet harvest. This ceremony contrasts with the other field sacrifices in that it is made not to the field but rather to a goddess. Furthermore, it is performed only after the harvest is in, rather than to the crops while they are still standing.

(vii) *First Jaggery Making: First Rice Harvesting; First Rice Cooking*
At a time determined from the astrological almanac (around September-October), a *pūja* is performed to Ganapati at the chimney of a family's jaggery oven before the first jaggery making begins. This ritual with its fashioning of an earthen image of Ganapati has already been discussed in the description of Vinayaka Caviti. Similarly, the rituals of first rice harvesting and first rice cooking, which follow after jaggery making has begun, have been described in the section dealing with the Sankranti festival.

Private Calendrical Observances

There are a number of rituals which fall on particular dates in the year that are only observed by certain households. The *puvvula yātra*, pilgrimage to the Simhachalam temple on the eve of *āṣāḍha purnimi*, has already been described in the discussion of wedding rituals, since it is very popular for newly-weds. Three other optional calendrical rituals centre on the worship of the Moon, the Sun, and the god, Sri Venkatesvara.

On *kārtika purṇimi* (full moon day of the lunar month of Kartika, around October-November), most of the Carpenter households in Yatapalem perform a ritual to worship the Moon. The Moon is associated with Siva, hence this festival occurs in Kartika, the month which is sacred to Siva. At night, in front of individual houses, a complex array of *pūja* items is laid out on a *muggu*-decorated area with an overturned rice-pounding mortar which has been decorated with vermillion and white powder. Each worshipper does a *daṇḍam* salute to the Moon as he or she throws offerings of fruits and vegetables up towards the sky. These offerings are caught by enthusiastic onlookers and kept as *prasādam*. A number of the offerings have turmeric and vermillion dots (often in threes) applied to them.

An almost identical ritual is performed in honour of the Sun (identified with the deity Suryudu or Surya-narayana) on *māgha śuddha saptami*, a

day which is called *ratha saptami* 'chariot seventh' ('chariot' refers to the chariot of the Sun god). This festival usually falls in January. It is performed in the middle of the day mainly by Gavaras and Carpenters. While only some twenty to thirty households perform this ritual, it becomes a day of celebration for the whole village as members of all castes rush playfully to compete in catching the offerings which are thrown. These include green coconuts, pumpkins, sugarcane stalks, bananas, and tulasi leaves. An oil lamp is lit and later placed at the household shrine where a *pūja* is done and three or five leaf-plates of food are offered. There is no evidence that clan membership determines the family tradition of performing this festival. Rather, it seems linked with idiosyncratic household preferences for naming members after the Sun god with such names as Suryanarayana, Suri, Surja Rao, etc.

In a similar way, families with members named after Venkatesvara—such as Venkata Ramana, Venku Naidu, Venkata Rao—celebrate an annual *pūja* on *phālguṇa śuddha ēkadaśi* (February-March). This is the time of a minor festival at a Venkatesvara temple at Vaddadi, a large historic village outside of the town of Chodavaram.

There are also private annual observances in honour of goddesses. The worship of Mahalaksmi *dēvata* on Kanumu day is performed by about ten Gavara households who have members, including men, named Mahalaksmi. In addition to this, there are two prominent annual vow fulfilments (*mokku*) to village goddesses by certain Gavara farmers. One of the goddesses, Musalatalli (*musali* 'old person') was introduced into the village by a man who migrated from another village on a uxorilocal marriage (*illarakam*). Her worship generally takes place on a Sunday in the lunar month of *bhādrapada* (August-September) and includes a procession to her abode in a banyan tree at which a *pūja* and sheep sacrifice are performed. Turmeric and vermillion are smeared on the tree and offerings of childrens' toys (*donḍakāylu*,) and saris are placed in it.

The other personal annual goddess worship centres on the twin shrines of Bangaramma-Durgalamma. It was initiated and is still led by a Saragadam clansman. This procession and sheep sacrifice take place on a Thursday in December. Beforehand, friends and neighbours 'sign up' for a portion of the meat, for which they pay a rupee or two. Often, the Headman receives his portion free. Before the patron of the festival leads the procession out to the shrines of the goddesses, his wife performs a *pūja* at their household shrine. In this, the sacrificial knife is placed at the shrine. After they return from the sacrifice they place the head of the sacrificial sheep at the house shrine.

Here ends our account of rituals that are part of the regular annual cycle. Before turning to consider rituals that occur unpredictably during

the year to deal with village-wide emergencies such as epidemics, it will be useful to note some general features the minor annual cycle rituals have in common. Like the major annual rituals, these festivals and observances serve to define social groups and proper behaviour and link them to the behaviour of nature itself. In particular, but not exclusively, they teach the value of obedience of wives to husbands, the moral interdependency of castes and settlements, the importance of homage to superiors, and the dependence of the earth's fertility on the villagers' appropriate social behaviour. In a society with many competing, rivalrous tendencies they propound an image of harmony and interdependence—the currency of which is the acceptance of social hierarchy and the proper payment of symbolic tribute.

Rituals for Unpredictable Village-wide Emergencies

Emergency rituals to appease negative forces have already been discussed in the context of life cycle rituals. These are the *śānti* ceremonies which are performed if birth, first menstruation, or death occur at astrologically inauspicious times. *Śāntis* are performed for the uncontrollable events of human life which cannot be synchronized with auspicious times. These events can render a person out of harmony with benevolent astrological forces and consequently liable to misfortune. Along similar lines of reasoning, a personal illness is interpreted as evidence that a harmonious relationship of hierarchical interdependence with a village goddess has been violated. To restore health, it is necessary to appease the goddess. Appeasement takes the form of symbolic self-abasement and offerings of respect (through *pūja* and votive performances).

Annual village goddess festivals are expressions of the same line of reasoning. Through the festivals a village maintains long-term ties with its goddesses. These act as a store of credit and as a restraint on the goddess not to inflict the village with illness. Despite this, epidemics do occasionally occur. At such times they are explained as the result of the improper performance or neglect of a previous festival and its particular goddess. In both cases, epidemic illnesses are attributed to a lack of sufficient amounts of respect having been shown to a goddess.

Paśuvula Paṇḍuga

A specific case of this kind occurred in August 1972 when many farmers' cattle fell mysteriously ill and died. A *paśuvula paṇḍuga*, 'animal festival' was immediately arranged on behalf of the entire village, to placate the goddess Paśuvula Māsamma. Villagers had neglected to worship her for many years. A village Carpenter berated the farmers (Gavaras) saying they had grown too proud,[23] that is to say insufficiently submissive or respectful to the goddess, and that it was no wonder that the goddess was

punishing them in this way.

In the rituals of the *paśuvula panḍuga* we observe the repetition of many of the basic elements already described for village goddess festivals—in personnel, symbols, and activities. As usual, dependent castes have special ritual jobs, for example drumming and carrying special ritual items such as the stake upon which a sacrificial pig is impaled. All the settlements of the Revenue Village participate, though the Gavaras provide the leadership and largest number of participants. The goal of the ritual is to cool the goodess' anger—sprinkling her with water from neem leaves; offering her food, a sacrifice, and gestures of respect—and beg her protection.

A procession sets out from the Yatapalem temple in the morning proceeding to the termite mound abode of the goddess on the northern boundary of the village. A pot of offerings is presented on behalf of each household that has domestic animals. Then, consecrated turmeric water is mixed from a communal pot into individual pots from each household. After the pig is impaled on a stake, the villagers hastily depart to sprinkle the 'consecrated water' on their cattle to protect them.

In the afternoon a smaller contingent, consisting mainly of the drummers and the *pūjāris*, proceed to a southern boundary of the village. There, at a neem tree, they impale another pig and put down an offering of a heap of cooked rice. Then a meal is made from the sacrificial pig for the castes who participate in the ritual (Barber, Washerman, Mala, Madiga).

These rituals are full of elements encountered in other ritual activities such as processions, circumambulations, *pūjas*, and sacrifices. Many of the symbols which are employed in the *pūjas* were also encountered in the village goddess festivals, such as the use of termite mound dirt and the use of neem. Neem branches decorate the Village Servant's drum, and are used to sprinkle the consecrated water on the goddess' termite mound and on animals to be protected. Neem wood is used to fashion the stakes on which the sacrifical pigs are impaled. The ubiquitous symbol of turmeric and vermillion also appears in numerous contexts. It decorates the forehead of the sacrificial pig, is smeared on the sacrificial stakes, is mixed into the consecrated water, and is used to make a household-shrine-type of panel on the neem tree in front of which the sacrificial meal is eaten.

Let us now look at the *paśuvula panḍuga* in detail. Its initial stages involve preparations in the village for the journey to the goddess' abode. In the middle of the morning, drumming begins at the platform in front of the Rama temple in Yatapalem. The drummers are Barbers, the Mala man who is the Village Servant (*bārki*), and Madigas. The Village Servant's drum is decorated with three dots of turmeric and vermillion as

well as branches of neem. A Washerman carries a flaming torch. They proceed to the house of the Vadram, the man who serves as the village goddess *pūjari*, for a pot of water. This is a brass pot filled with water into which turmeric and paste of *vasantakam* root has been added. The pot is decorated with vermillion dots (*boṭṭu*).

Meanwhile the Carpenters prepare a stake out of neem wood. It is sharply pointed and is stained a brilliant yellow with turmeric on which has been drawn six vertical lines in bright red vermillion. The stake is brought to the Vadram's house. A Washerman brings the sacrificial pig, a baby pig that has been washed and has had a turmeric and vermillion dot applied to its forehead. The stake, the pig, and the drum of the Village Servant are then passed—in that order—through incense smoke.

Taking these items, the drummers return to the square in front of the Rama temple where participants are gathering to go in procession to the goddess at the northern boundary of the village. It is the custom for one man and one woman from each household to participate. Each woman carries a pot (*dāka*) of offerings on her head consisting of ingredients known to be favourites of the goddess—grains and leaves topped with fried confections, *uṇḍrālu* and *būrelu*. The women also carry a small pot containing a sprig of neem and water mixed with turmeric paste and lime (*cunnam*). The lime-turmeric mixture lends the water a reddish colour.

When villagers have gathered in strength, the procession sets out into the fields, led by the drummers (Barbers, Village Servant, and Madigas), a Barber carrying a pot used as a censer and a Washerman carrying a torch. The goal of the procession is the termite mound abode of the goddess at the northern boundary (*polimēra*, 'boundary') of the village. In the festival observed in 1972, the precise location of that mound was not exactly remembered. A Gavara elder of the Saragadam clan, Saragadam Appala Naidu, finally decided which area and which of the several mounds was correct one.

The procession circumambulates the termite mound, led by the drummers and *pūjāris*—the Saragadam clansman and the Vadram *pūjāri*. The crowd then waits while the *pūjāris* perform *pūja* by sprinkling water from the Vadram's brass pot on the termite mound and putting turmeric wads on the mound. The wife of the Saragadam *pūjāri* next puts a lighted oil lamp down on the mound and draws a sketchy *muggu* diagram over it with white powder. The Kottapalem *bhaṭṭuḍu*, the Washerman who customarily becomes possessed by the goddess at the times of village goddess festivals, steps forward and puts turmeric and bananas on the mound. The Saragadam *pūjāri* is then the first to put his family's offering pot down on the mound. The torch, which has been carried by the Washerman, is placed into the mound followed by the sacrificial stake which is stuck

upright into the ground nearby. All the other participants then perform their *pūjas*, sprinkling the mound with water from neem sprigs dipped into their individual water pots, and putting their offering pots on the mound.

The next step is the distribution of consecrated water, *vasanta nīḷḷu*, from the communal pot as a sort of *prasādam* that is used for protection. In 1972, there was a clamourous struggle as participants struggled to get the consecrated water by trying to push ahead of one another. The crowd was eventually controlled by Gavara elders who organised people to sit in two parallel rows facing each other with their individual water pots in front of them. The drummers and the *pūjāris* circumambulated the seated crowd three times, carrying the communal brass water pot from which they sprinkled people using neem branches which they dipped into it. Then the communal pot was taken through the middle of the two rows of people and its contents doled out into the individual pots. Most participants added termite mound dirt to their pots.

A Madiga elder raises the sacrificial pig in a *daṇḍam* gesture and then impales it on the stake. People shout, "wooo, wooo, wooo," as at the time of village goddess sacrifices, to scare off hungry ghosts. Many run away frightened while others go more slowly. However, all immediately leave the area to go to sprinkle their cattle with the consecrated water. Previously it was the practice to bring all the cattle together for the sacrifice and then drive them away at the sound of the screeching of the pig as it is impaled. In 1972, it was decided that the illness might spread if the cattle were brought together and so this practice was discontinued.

In the afternoon there is another *pūja*, this time at the village boundary on the south side of the village. Only a token group of villagers go rather than the massive number of participants in the morning ritual. A procession leaves the Yatapalem Rama temple in the afternoon, led by Barber, Mala and Madiga drummers; the Village Servant holding a fresh stake smeared with turmeric and vermillion; and a Washerman carrying a sacrificial baby pig. They also take a basket of uncooked rice, turmeric, oil, other cooking ingredients and cooking pots.

The procession's goal is a neem tree at the southern boundary of the village. After the participants circumambulate the tree three times, a *pūja* is performed. The Kottapalem Washerman *bhaṭṭuḍu* makes a turmeric panel on which he puts three vertical vermillion lines on the side of the tree facing south (so that one faces roughly north to view it). The *pūjāris* sprinkle turmeric water on the site around the tree and then throw some turmeric-smeared rice (*acintalu*) at it.

The sacrificial pig is impaled on the stake. It is removed and prepared into a curry. Rice is cooked and poured into a heap (*kumbham*) at the tree. Then a rice and curry meal is eaten as a form of *prasādam* by the

pork-eating castes who participate—Barbers, Washermen, Settigollu, Malas and Madigas.

Uru Kaṭṭaḍam

While epidemics are dealt with through emergency rituals to goddesses, different techniques are required for other sorts of threats to village well-being. For instance, after the sudden mysterious death of the Headman in December 1970, apparently due to a heart attack, a number of villagers in Yatapalem were afflicted with severe dysentery. A young man died, followed by his father a few days later. Another member of their family became seriously ill, and sick people in other families worried that their illnesses were somehow related. The Headman died when he had apparently been in excellent health. His had been just the sort of unfulfilled life that turns a dead person into a vengeful ghost who wanders with no fixed abode. In addition, the Headman died at an astrologically inauspicious time. Considering the recent series of sudden illnesses and deaths, the village elders decided to have a *śānti* performed on behalf of the entire village. (Normally, a death at an inauspicious time requires a *śānti* only on behalf of the immediate family and residents in adjacent houses.)

This ceremony is called *ūru kaṭṭaḍam* or *grāma śānti*.[24] It is performed by a specialist known as a *cukkēṭigōḍu*.[25] The man selected was of the Konarlu caste (apparently related to, or recently differentiating itself from, Gollas). He was summoned from a fairly distant village by a Yatapalem Barber deputed by the village elders. When the Konaru arrived and analysed the circumstances of the Headman's death, he commented that unless the *graha* ('planet, star, spirit, devil'), were counteracted, nine people would die.

The ritual was performed on the day after the Headman's *karma* (i.e. the eleventh day after his death, the occasion for a funerary feast). Among the main components of the ritual are the drawing of special *yantram* diagrams (intrinsically powerful diagrams and letters) in the form of a *muggu* drawing in rice flour or lime powder, and in the form of writing on a small piece of copper sheet (*rāgi rēku*); the chanting of *mantram* formulae; the offering and manipulation of powerful substances (Ganges water, 'tiger oil', ayurvedic herbs, etc.); the sacrificing of a chicken; the cooking of a pot of offerings; the circumambulation of the settlement (delineating a boundary within which the malevolent forces cannot enter); the preparation of a '*graha*-repelling' incense which is distributed to be burnt by individual households.

Since the rituals are conducted by an outside specialist, they constitute techniques and formulae which are incomprehensible to the villagers, as obscure as the meaning of Sanskrit *mantrams* in a ceremony conducted

by a Brahman. Nevertheless, the basic principles are familiar to the villagers. Sacrifice and circumambulation are common components of the village symbolic idiom. *Mantras* are prominent in Brahmanic rituals and *yantras* are encountered in talismans and, to a certain extent, associated with *muggu* diagrams. Furthermore, there are a number of similarities with the *paśuvula panḍuga* rituals, such as the use of consecrated turmeric-mixed water and other substances to ward off malevolent influences. Also, the contents of the pot of cooked offerings are essentially identical with the pots of offerings brought by individual households to *Paśuvula Māremma's* termite mound abode.

The circumambulation of the settlement is a typical example of multi-caste participation in a procession on behalf of the community as a whole. It is led by the Konaru who throws ritually treated millet grains and periodically stops to pour three lines of water and scratch three lines with a knife blade 'to block the path of the *graha*.' A Settigollu follows behind him holding the pot of consecrated water which contains water from five wells, turmeric, sow's urine, Ganges water, and toddy. Next comes a Washerman who carries the tray of malodourous incense that contains donkey droppings and cow dung, ayurvedic herbs, potassium, etc., and which he constantly puts on the embers in the fire pot held by a Barber. Behind them comes a Madiga with the knife.

They circumambulate the village in a counter-clockwise direction. The significance of this is perhaps not so much its reversal of the usual auspicious practice, which is to keep the object of veneration faced by the right-hand side of the body. Rather, in this case, the goal is to keep the attacking forces outside the village, hence the right-hand side of the body is oriented towards the outside.

People asked the Konaru if it was necessary for all the villagers to be within the circle of the procession in order to be protected. He assured them that this was not necessary. The malevolent influence is thus linked to the location of the inauspicious death. Villagers are liable to be attacked by virtue of their having a house in the village rather than through their social ties with the family or the settlement. (This explains the exclusion of Aripaka and other settlement sites from the ritual encirclement.) These concepts are akin to the notion that misfortunes can occur by virtue of the location or structural features of a house (see discussion of principles of evil eye and village architecture in Chapter 3).

During the circumambulation, the Konaru buries the head of the sacrificial chicken at the main entrance to the village. Once his rounds are completed, he brings the batch of consecrated incense back to the Rama temple where the preliminaries of his ritual are performed. He hands it over to the Gavara elders who gather there to supervise its distribution to

every household in the settlement. After some haggling and debate on the Konaru's fee, he is paid and leaves the village taking the pot of cooked offerings to place beneath a tree outside the village. He also takes the body of the sacrificed chicken as part of his payment.

The elders see to it that the incense is wrapped in small pieces of paper and properly distributed to every household. In the evening, households perform a series of rituals. Everyone takes a leaf from over the entrance-way to his house and burns it in a pile with leaves from others' houses. Many families then sacrifice a chicken at the entrance to their house and bury its head at the threshold. Then all families drive a series of spikes, *nēkulu*, in a row across the threshold. There is much individual variation but the spikes are usually driven in a series of three or four (made of the following materials: *inumu*, 'iron'; *nimma*, 'lime tree'; *dabba*, 'lemon tree'; and *muṣiḍi*, 'Strychnos nux vomica'-Linn.) They then burn the special incense.

These actions repeat on a small scale what the Konaru does for the village as a whole. They secure the entrances to their homes with appeasements (sacrifices) and ritual barriers (spikes, incense). They also attempt to destroy any malevolent influence that has already attached itself to their house by burning a leaf from the entrance-way. This technique repeats the concept behind the removal of *diṣṭi*, evil eye. The malevolent force is lured into an object which is then harmlessly destroyed or removed. It is significant that so much effort centres on the doorway and threshold of the house. We are reminded that the doorpost is the first item installed (i.e. raised) when the building of a house is initiated. The doorpost is also the subject of elaborate notions of lines of sight and alignment of doorways, etc. Doorposts are even identified with the households who live within them since households are referred to as *gaḍapalu*, 'doorposts.' Like other important ritual items, doorposts are always smeared with turmeric and vertical vermillion lines and dots. Often this is made more permanent in yellow and red paint.

NOTES

1. *Uṇḍrālu* are a typical variety of food served at weddings.

2. Note the parallel with Gavara weddings in which there are palanquins also carried by four Washermen.

3. It will be recalled that a bell and a conch are also used by Jangams auspiciously to dispatch a deceased person to Siva's heavenly abode after he or she has been cremated.

4. *Sabāgyam* is a variant of *saubhāgyam*, 'auspiciousness, good fortune' (compare *saubhāgyavati*, auspicious woman with her husband living'); *vaibagam* is a variant of *vaibhavam*, 'wealth, riches, grandeur'; *kaḷyāṇam*, 'wedding.'

5. In village usage the term *tīrtham* means 'a fair', but it also means 'sacred water', such as that used to bathe a deity, and 'holy place', such as a shrine (perhaps originally one on a sacred river). The use of *tīrtham* to mean fair probably derives from the practice of pilgrimage (*tīrthayātra*), since villagers go to *tīrthams* in other places and *tīrthams* have a shrine as their focus.

6. The making of elaborate *muggu* diagrams in rice flour by women is one of the distinctive features of the *nelaganṭa* and *sankrānti* periods.

7. The term *nelaganṭa* appears to derive from this month (*nela*) of ringing the bell (*ganṭa*).

8. In 1971, *sankrānti* fell on 14 January.

9. This is reminiscent of the placement of the *ghaṭṭam* pots of the village goddess, or the bathing pots during a marriage, on a layer of rice rather than directly on the ground.

10. Aripaka and Yatapalem each have a temple candelabrum but no other settlement in Aripaka Revenue Village does.

11. During the year, Komatis and Gavaras who were just about to go on pilgrimage to Sri Venkatesvara at Tirupati circulated in Yatapalem soliciting offerings to be conveyed by them to the temple offering box.

12. In the 1971 Yatapalem Tirtham, out of 22 sellers, 13 were Gavara women, 7 were Gavara men, and 2 were Aripaka Komati men.

13. This is the case for the Gavara-dominated village of Bhogapuram located in a very productive sugar-cane growing zone along the Sarada River north of Arakapalli. This *tīrtham*, run by the Gavara village *munsif*, is adjacent to an extraordinary building housing life-sized painted statues of his mother—who died an auspicious woman—and his father.

14. It will be recalled that in other contexts such as the structuring of labour between castes or bureaucrats, the person in the higher status is aloof and has others do his bidding.

15. The reader is referred to Tables 27 and 28.

16. *Pacca* is modified with 'leaf-' to mean 'green': *āku-pacca*, 'leaf green', and with 'turmeric-' to mean 'yellow': *pasupu-pacca*, 'turmeric yellow.'

17. *Gaṇapati* or *Gaṇēsa* or *Vināyaka*, lord of beginnings and of overcoming obstacles, the elephant-headed son of Siva.

18. This is an exclamation encountered also at the immersion of Gairamma.

19. Equivalent to 114° on the Farenheit scale.

20. *Santarpaṇam* literally means 'satisfying, gratifying.'

21. This is further evidence of the interpenetration of the concepts of gods, well-being, and specific objects which are sources of potential prosperity or harm.

22. *Poli* means 'profit' or 'gain' and is considered helpful in encouraging the crop yield to be plentiful. In a similar way, merchants repeat the word *lābham*, 'profit', when they count or weigh items in which they are dealing. The phrase '*poli, poli*', recurs in the first rice-cutting ceremony and is also chanted during the threshing operations.

23. *Garvam*, 'pride.'

24. *Uru*, 'village'; *kaṭṭuṭa*, 'to tie, bind, bar, prohibit, etc.'; *grāma*, 'village'; *śānti*, 'peace, calm', i.e. 'pacification.'

25. *Cukka*, 'star, omen'; *ēti*, from *vēyu* 'put, throw, shut'; *gōḍu* = *vāḍu*, 'person.'

PART III

DYNAMIC INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOCIETY AND RITUAL

CHAPTER 7

RIVALRY AND TRIBUTE: COMPETITION THROUGH RITUAL EVENTS AND THE ROLE OF RITUAL SYMBOLS

So far, in our examination of ritual, we have concerned ourselves with the ideological content of ritual, the symbolic definition, and reinforcement of social hierarchy and interdependence. At another level, however, ritual events are manipulated for competitive or divisive purposes by the groups who participate in them. In this chapter we examine instances of rivalry and competition which were expressed in the context of ritual activity. The first case concerns the relationship between Yatapalem and Aripaka while the second is a case of tensions within the Gavara caste. We then summarise our conclusions on the way ritual and symbolism create a moral underpinning to the village's social structure.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARIPAKA AND YATAPALEM AS EXPRESSED THROUGH BIDS FOR AUTONOMY IN THE PERFORMANCE OF RITUAL

The reader is reminded that Yatapalem was originally formed by Gavaras who sought to move away from the dominance of the Rajus in Aripaka. Subsequently, with the growth of cash crop prosperity from sugar-cane and the coming of Indian independence, the Gavaras in Yatapalem grew economically and politically stronger than the Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis in the original village of Aripaka. Recent construction of a new Rama temple in Yatapalem and changes in the cycle of rotating village goddess festivals are symptomatic of these shifts.

The Aripaka Rama temple, a simple unadorned structure, had been constructed by the Komatis and, like the old Yatapalem temple, had the curious feature of facing roughly southwest rather than east, the usual orientation of temples of sanskritic deities. It is possible that this was

copied from the Simhachalam temple which is also entered from the west. But, it may also have been due to a lack of knowledge of sanskritic conventions of temple building or an analogy to household shrines which are in the northeast corner on the east wall (and thus approached from the west).

In the late 1960s the most elderly Gavara in the village, Kalla Appanna, invited a sadhu, whom he had met in Anakapalli, to stay at a small hut near his fields which he referred to as his ashram. This sadhu, whom the villagers called Sadhubabu, wore clothing of bright orange and shaved his head. He was a middle-aged Reddi from the Godavari delta region who had acquired some knowledge of scriptural lore and religious philosophy, sufficient to impress and gratify the villagers. He took delight in lecturing them on god's wonders and satisfied a thirst they had for learning more about scriptural religion.

The sadhu told the people of Yatapalem that it was very improper that their Rama temple was facing 'the wrong direction.' He cited the decline of the Komatis' fortunes in Aripaka as a consequence of their temple having been wrongly oriented. The sadhu soon became the centre of a movement in Yatapalem to build a splendid new Rama temple. This would be more in keeping with their new economic status and would also be a form of thanks to Rama for their improved circumstances.

The sadhu was the ideal man to coordinate the building of the temple because everyone trusted him with the large sums of money required (Rs. 10,000). Also, since the project could be phrased as being motivated by a sadhu, the somewhat partisan nature of the project, to glorify the Gavaras and Yatapalem, was less blatant. It is remarkable that a printed invitation for the foundation ceremony in 1968 listed the village Record Keeper (an Aripaka Brahman), and a number of important Aripaka Rajus and Komatis as hosts before listing the Gavara elders who were actually responsible for the temple construction. Here too a façade of village unity was maintained. Nevertheless, there could be no doubt that the new Yatapalem temple, with its sculpted basalt idols, elaborate spires and exuberant ornamentation, left the Aripaka Rama temple in the shade.[1]

Changes in the frequencies of village goddess festivals also hint at shifts of power from Aripaka to Yatapalem. Originally, the Bandamma festival had been performed only once in three years in a cycle which alternated with Ravalamma and Maridamma. In the early 1960s there was a cholera epidemic immediately following a Bandamma festival. Another Bandamma festival was hastily performed to appease the goddess and the epidemic subsided. It was then decided that the Bandamma festival should be performed annually. The Bandamma festival subsequently took on a greater significance as the principal joint ritual event of the entire village. It does

not seem to be chance or the lone occurrence of an epidemic that synchronised this change with the emergence of importance of Yatapalem and a need to have an annually repeating festival to reaffirm village unity in place of the previous system of triennial cycles.

There is evidence to suggest that previously the triennial festival to Ravalamma was the most important goddess festival. The Ravalamma temple was the first temple to be built in cement in the 1930s. Its rituals are unique and more elaborate than the other goddess festivals. For example, only Ravalamma has two brass horses in her procession (carried by Settigollu who have no ritual job in the other goddess festivals). There is also an elaborate procession of a chariot and a mock elephant for Ravalamma which are not encountered in rituals for other goddesses.[2] The Surisetti clan of the Gavaras plays an important ritual role in the Ravalamma festival although that clan has been in decline since its prosperity in the 1930s and before.

Apart from building a new Rama temple there were other ways in which the Gavaras expressed their distinctiveness from Aripaka in the guise of ritual. On several occasions when there was a choice of interpretations of the correct timing of festivals divergent decisions were made. In 1971 there was a controversy over the correct timing of *Nāgula Caviti*. According to the saying chanted at *Dīpāvali*, *Nāgula Caviti* is supposed to come five days afterwards. That year, however, the fourth lunar phase (*caviti*) did not start until the afternoon, while the festival is traditionally performed in the morning. The Gavaras decided to do the festival the following day despite reports by the Settigollu that Aripaka, Kottapalem, and the neighbouring Gavara village of Bangarampalem were celebrating it on that day.

Another occasion when there were divergent interpretations of timing was on the celebration of the private calendrical observance by several families of *Ratha Saptami*, worship of the Sun, Suryanarayana. The Aripaka Record Keeper and a number of Rajus celebrated this festival on the astrologically correct day (*māgha śuddha saptami*, i.e. seventh lunar phase in the waxing fortnight of the month of Magha) which fell on a Saturday. The Gavaras did the rituals on the following day and argued that it was more important to perform the festival on a Sunday, the day of the week sacred to the Sun.

In the light of this expression of ritual autonomy between Yatapalem and Aripaka, it is interesting to note that in 1972 Aripaka revived a festival in connection with their Rama temple which had not been performed for several years. This was a *Rāma Sambaram*, a single day's festival which took place somewhat arbitrarily at the beginning of June (end of Jyēṣṭa month). The temple's picture of Rama and Sita was taken around Aripaka

in a wedding palanquin. In the procession, Yatapalem 'service castes' (Barbers, Washermen, Madigas, Jangams) performed their customary ritual services such as drumming, carrying a torch, and carrying the palanquin. They were accompanied by a Komati who directed the proceedings and by Velamas and Kapus who performed stick-twirling displays and dances. No Gavaras participated, however, though they did attend the night-long operatic drama afterwards. This was the *Bālanāgamma* drama and was performed primarily by Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis though Velamas and Kapus also assisted.

RIVALRIES AND TENSIONS WITHIN THE GAVARA CASTE WHICH FOUND EXPRESSION IN CONTROVERSIES OVER FESTIVALS

The role of village leaders in village goddess festivals was in many ways a barometer of the state of village leadership and rivalries within the Gavara caste. This was suggested not only by observations made in Aripaka Revenue Village, but also by events at festivals in other villages. In villages in which the local leaders were in firm, uncontested control, a festival would proceed with few, if any, fights over procedure. In other villages where there were distinct rival factions[3] hostility sometimes erupted into fights with bamboo poles.

At the time of the Yatapalam Bandamma festival in April 1971 the fluid and unsettled state of the village leadership was reflected in the festival. The old Headman (of the Rapeti clan) who died in December 1970 was the last of an older generation of formal political leaders aside from the Vice-President (also of the Rapeti clan). Though he hardly approached his predecessor in power, he was still very much an old-style Headman from the days before the creation of the posts of President and Vice-President. An unusually large attendance at his funeral attested to his wide following.[4] After he died, the main formal Gavara political leader was the Panchayat President, a twenty-four year old (of the Malla clan) who did not fully assume the role of dispute arbitrator because he lacked the authority which derives from seniority. The Vice-President was not a particularly forceful man either, though he was older and an active dispute settler. In the interim, the village Record Keeper arranged for an older brother of the Vice-President to be appointed as temporary Headman. He was a soft-spoken unpresuming man who could be relied upon not to have ambitions to succeed the old Headman since he already held the position of Record Keeper-cum-Headman of Sirsipalli, a small Settigollu settlement near Bangarampalem.

The son of the recently deceased Headman, in the direct line of succes-

sion, was very young (twenty-one years of age) and unsure of being appointed. Though the village Record Keeper came out publicly endorsing him, he was well aware of the keen competition of other entrants for the Headmanship examination. It was not until seven months later, in July 1971, that he was appointed and then only provisionally, depending on his passing the examination.

When we view the role of the village leaders in the 1971 Bandamma festival in April against this unsettled background a number of incidents become intelligible. There was a controversy on the evening of the penultimate day of the festival. The Village Servant and Vadram bitterly complained that there had been no provision for formal entertainment to aid the villagers in their obligation to keep a vigil in honour of the goddess. The only Gavara elders present were fairly ineffectual and peripheral men. During their arguing, one pushed the Vadram *pūjāri* aside. The *pūjāri* sat down, sulked, and shortly became possessed by the goddess who complained that her festival was not being properly performed by the villagers. The whole atmosphere seemed to be coloured by a feeling of lack of leadership. The next day, though the President and Vice-President were in the village in the afternoon they did not consistently assume leadership roles when sporadic fighting and controversies broke out during the *ghaṭṭam* pot procession. The son of the old Headman was prominent in one fight but then faded into the crowd. The Vice-President was more active and at one point gave a drunken Jangam a nose bleed. The President stayed out of these controversies and watched aloofly from nearby. As the procession began to move, the President lagged behind and the acting-Headman also kept himself detached and watched from the front of his house.

The 1971 Bandamma festival was also the occasion for the challenge to the traditional rights of a Gavara elder of the Saragadam 2 (Naidoru) subclan, Saragadam Appala Naidu, about whom rumours circulated that he was stingy. It was this Gavara who traditionally carried the wooden idols out to the goddess temple and did the *pūja* inside the temple,[5,6] not the Vadram *pūjāri* who was more a guardian of the *ghaṭṭam* pots than anything else. It is difficult to say whether this conflict was made possible by the fluid leadership situation. His right to his position of honorary leadership was challenged by the President (a Malla clansman), Vice-President (a Rapeti clansman) and seemingly other elders as well.

A situation was set up in which his ritual prerogatives were by-passed. He had formerly had the right to determine when the festival should be held, but for this festival the President and Vice-President usurped that privilege. The President claimed that he had waited for this Saragadam elder to bring five measures of rice, part of which is used for placing under

the *ghaṭṭam* pots during the *vālakālu* skits. When he failed to show up, the President and Vice-President went and bought some rice from the Komati's shop. Later, the President and Vice-President wanted to charge the Saragadam elder an unusually large household levy for the festival. He refused to pay and it was not long before rumours began circulating in the village that the funds collected for festivals were being embezzled ('eaten') by the village leaders (i.e. the President and Vice-President).

The first festival to follow Bandamma was the one to Maridamma towards the end of June. It was supposed to be held two weeks or so after the Bandamma festival but was postponed by the President three times, symptomatic of the unsettled leadership situation. The first excuse was that it should be held only after the wedding season in May. Some time later the Vadram was possessed by the goddess who spoke through him to say that the festival should be held later. It was postponed a third time supposedly because of the death of a Velama of Aripaka who had customarily held the role of becoming possessed at goddess festivals.

During the performance of the festival there were numerous rumblings of dissatisfaction and discontent. The Yatapalem Madiga caste head (*ijamāni*) angrily complained that the Malas and Madigas had not been given money for *sāra* (country rum) and alleged that the acting-Headman was 'eating up' festival funds. Disparagingly he remarked that though illnesses had lately been on the increase the Gavara elders had not given the customary donations for liquor to the Harijan drummers to make it a proper festival to pacify the goddess. It should be noted that, through the goddess festival, the health of the village is considered to be dependent on the proper fulfilment of obligations between castes.

During the procession most of the villagers only went as far as the road and did not make the three-kilometre walk out to the temple itself for the sacrifice. Those who did go, commented that most villagers and even the President and Vice-President had not come from the road because nobody was properly leading them. They spoke of the old days when the predecessor of the Headman who had just died ruled with an iron fist. The lack of firm leadership had caused this festival to be performed in a half-hearted fashion, they complained. And indeed the entertainment during the procession had been noticeably meagre, without fireworks or stick-twirling. A young man scornfully commented on the Gavara elders who had not financially supported the festival, "the elders have suddenly become poor people, they don't even have leftover rice water to eat" (*naiḷḷu bīḍōḷḷu ayiponru, ganji kūḍa lēdu vāḷḷaki*).

In the third week in July, the son of the old Headman was provisionally appointed to succeed his father. However, he still had the examination hanging over him. During August and September he seemed unsure of

himself. He complained of having to make frequent trips into Anakapalli and of having problems in his dealings with bureaucrats in town. He also had to contend with recalcitrant villagers who had failed to pay their household dues before the Maridamma festival, probably another major reason for its repeated postponement. After the Maridamma festival, rumours circulated that the President and Headman were embezzling village funds. This made it even more difficult to collect the overdue funds and jeopardised future festivals which would have even less money to run on. The Headman once commented that he would have preferred collecting an annual festival levy together with the land tax as his father's predecessor had done. However, in the new situation in which the power of the headmanship had eroded, such a strategy was out of the question.

Against this background, a group of young men began clamouring for a Bangaramma festival toward the end of August. The new Headman disappointed them by declining to become involved. Again, one of the main issues was the difficulty of financing such a festival in the face of opposition from certain quarters.

Two months later, in October, the Yatapalem village elders opposed providing financial backing for a Gairamma festival. However, when it was learnt that Mallolla Pakalu would be sponsoring a Gairamma festival, a number of young men[7] decided to take matters into their own hands. They formed what they dubbed *yuva-jana-sangham*, 'young people's society', a name borrowed from a Gavara youth club in Anakapalli, and went around the village collecting money on their own. In this, they had the complicity of the Headman who was identified with them as a young man.

In this controversy the elder and younger generations exhibited notable differences in their attitudes towards money. The elders had experienced scarcity and were habitually parsimonious. By contrast, the young people had grown up in the era of cash crop prosperity. They looked up to the rich Gavara villages and Anakapalli, where money was liberally spent on festivals.

The core of the 'youth faction' consisted of several Rapeti and Saragadam men. Several were youngest or middle sons of wealthy or prominent families. Among these were a number of educated men who had studied in higher schools outside the village. Others, though not necessarily members of particularly important families, were enthusiastic participants in festival entertainment activities and popular with their peers. In short, they seemed to be incipient village leaders just beginning to assert themselves. It is significant that for their immediate task they had enlisted the support of the new Headman, himself a man just beginning to exercise authority and leadership. The constant references to the indifference or opposition

of the elders (*peddalu*, 'big men') to holding a Gairamma festival further pointed to a central underlying issue of the competition for authority between the younger generation and their elders.

The tensions that surfaced in the controversy with the elders over expenditures for the Yatapalem Gairamma festival also involved rivalry with Mallolla Pakalu. Evidence of this rivalry was emerging even in the 1970 Gairamma celebrations. The final day of the Mallolla Pakalu Gairamma festival had been held four days after the one for Yatapalem. At that time, Mallolla Pakalu sponsored an all night drama (a story of Bālarāma performed by a hired troupe) in contrast to Yatapalem which had not provided any special entertainment for its festival. Both the holding of its festival at a later date and the sponsorship of entertainment were ways Mallolla Pakalu showed off its relative wealth. It was well known that the length of time Gairamma could be 'kept' was directly linked to the amount of money the community could afford (because of the costs of keeping an oil lamp lit for twenty-four hours a day and supplying food offerings daily). Hiring a drama troupe was a rather expensive affair as well.

During the daily evening entertainment for Gairamma, certain elders (the Vice-President and Saragadam Appala Naidu) were conspicuously absent from the festivities in Yatapalem, though no formal rift had come out into the open. At those evening sessions one of the youth group could always be seen scrupulously keeping daily accounts of the festival expenditure, sometimes with advice from the new Headman. After they had decided upon the date for the final celebration day, they learnt that Mallolla Pakalu had fixed its celebration for exactly the same time.

By the last day of the festival there was open talk of factions (*pārṭīlu*, 'parties'). People voiced annoyance at Mallolla Pakalu deliberately holding its festival at the same time. After the Yatapalem procession had got underway, the Vice-President suddenly arrived on the scene. He belonged to the group of elders who had been unenthusiastic about Yatapalem celebrating the Gairamma festival. In the interest of unity, he urged the Yatapalem procession to go to the road to join the procession in Mallolla Pakalu. This suggestion was rejected by the youths who said, "where were you for all these weeks up until now ?" The Vice-President eventually gave up and rode off on his bicycle. At one point, the Vice-President returned from Mallolla Pakalu with the President to Yatapalem but they simply joined the crowd of spectators.

The reason for a controversy and conflict to have arisen over the 1971 Gairamma festival is attributable to a combination of three factors: first, the village still lacked the unifying authority of a firm Headman and the new man had only been provisionally appointed; second, there was tension

between the traditional elders, whose authority derived from the hierarchical principle of seniority, and young office holders whose posts were the creation of the government which did not abide by this principle; third, the latent rivalry between Mallolla Pakalu and Yatapalem was a product of the growing economic strength of the Malla clan--nearly half of whom had migrated to Mallolla Pakalu since the 1940s—and the relative decline of the formerly pre-eminent Saragadam clan. In addition, a move to Mallolla Pakalu by the richest Malla residents of Yatapalem was imminent.[8]

The Gairamma festival is an eminently suitable medium through which to express economic rivalry because of its symbolic association with the harvest and fecundity of the crops. The Malla family participated in other rituals linked to and expressing their economic prosperity. They were the only Gavara clan to perform a series of field sacrifices, to Ravalamma and at *citta kārte*. However, this undercurrent of economic competition was not a fundamental rift within the Gavara caste in the village, nor was it exclusively an issue of the Malla clan. Three Gavara clans have members living in Mallolla Pakalu—Malla, Saragadam, and Doddi. The three households of Doddi are poor in-laws of the Malla families (of which there are a total of nine households). In addition, there are three households of the Saragadam 3 sub-clan. A glance back at the economic survey of Gavara clans and sub-clans reveals that the Saragadam 3 have the highest average income per household of any sub-clan group (Table 12). The Malla come second.

The controversial Gairamma festival in 1971 was followed by a period in which the new Headman consolidated his leadership. This was not, however, without the persistance of rumours that the Headman had been criticised by government authorities alleging he was not properly performing his job. He had also to contend with a certain amount of continuing open competition for the Headmanship examination. The constant appearance of the village Record Keeper in his company tended to legitimise him and mute his competition.

By the first months of 1972 the Headman seemed to have well established himself. In the 1972 Bandamma festival in April he demonstrated his ability to provide leadership to oversee the festivities, which proceeded without mishap. The Ravalamma festival followed without delay a month later in early May.

We have already mentioned the apparent declining importance of the Ravalamma festival, a triennial celebration, in relation to the Bandamma festival which has been made into an annual event. Here it is worth noting the aspect of rivalry within the Gavara caste that this shift in emphasis represents. The Ravalamma festival is a festival in which the Saragadam

clan and the elder Saragadam Appala Naidu, are specially featured[9] along with the Surisetti clan, one of the few which is a non-intermarrying 'brother clan' of the Saragadam. As a consequence of changing the frequency of the Bandamma festival, the Saragadam clan's ritual prerogatives have been, in a sense, de-emphasised, despite there having been no change in the Ravalamma festival itself.

In the 1972 Ravalamma festival, Saragadam Appala Naidu, whose importance had been challenged in 1971, played a prominent role.[10] Relations of the Headman and the elders showed no evidence of the former friction. The Headman had come into his own and was far more prominent than the President in directing the festival activities.

Towards the end of July, there were fresh rumours that the Headman had come into conflict with the Village Record Keeper who had been his advocate until then. It was darkly hinted that they both had filed complaints against each other with the Taluk officials. Around the same time came the news that the Headman had not succeeded in passing the Headmanship examination and would have to take it again. Perhaps his failure was the factor that aggravated his relations with the Record Keeper who had spared no pains to instruct him in the filling-in of forms and procedures etc. This state of the village leadership was reflected in the emergency worship of Paśuvula Māramma when an epidemic of animal disease broke out in August 1972. The most prominent leaders directing those rituals were of the elder generation, the Vice-President and Saragadam Appala Naidu. In time, however, the Headman did succeed in passing the examination and developed a durable working relationship with the Record Keeper.[11]

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUAL SYMBOLS : HIERARCHY AND MORALITY

One of the primary messages of the ritual structure is that the entire universe is tied into a moral system in which well-being is assured for people when they utilize the idiom of hierarchy to express respect. Relations with deities, for instance, are phrased in the symbolic idiom of idealised relations between people, namely those that show respect through expressions of tribute—self-subordination and dependence upon a superior such as is found in *pūja*. These relations are not merely mirror-reflections of actual human relations. Rather, they are expressions of ideal categories which are created by and exist in the rituals. Villagers behave towards deities in ways which are traditionally handed down and conceive of these methods as axiomatic, proper by definition. They believe that deities that are properly worshipped bring them benefits such as maintaining or

restoring their health, bestowing or enhancing their fertility, and promoting their economic prosperity.

Since they attribute their misfortunes to their neglect of deities, their belief is strengthened rather than diminished in the face of the inevitable illnesses and mishaps which occur in the course of normal life. This is because each time a particular illness or misfortune occurs, there is a reactivation of the message that well-being derives from showing the proper symbolic subordination and respect. These symbolic forms create an ideal model of behaviour which is extended to the relations between people. Though in actual fact, relations between persons and groups do not always conform to neat categories of hierarchy, relationships are expressed in these stereotype terms which de-emphasise and screen discrepancies from conscious perception.

Performances of rituals are not only the fulfilment of obligations between people and deities, they are also the occasions for the fulfilment of obligations between people in society. Participation in rituals serves to delineate groups who act together for mutual benefit and well-being. In the process, it defines and legitimates the political authorities who lead the rituals. Stereotyped duties of various castes in rituals are stylized, idealised paradigms for social interrelations, particularly of the tie of long-term economic subservience and service by one caste for another. In particular, Barbers, Washermen, and Harijans play essential roles in the life cycle rituals of the Brahman, Raju, Komati, and Gavara and other Shudra castes. The ritual forms of long-term ties and these long-term economic relations between castes are both expressions of an ideal of interdependent cooperation which is not so clearly observable in reality.

Symbols are also central to the creation of an ideology concerning women which arises from the need of men to explain their domination over them. This ideology evokes the concept of women's *āśa* in which women are believed to be more emotional than men, as well as more attached to the world, more lusty, more difficult to control, and more threatening if not kept firmly in control. The concept of the inauspiciousness of widowhood and the virtuousness of wives subordinate to living husbands is related to this need to exert pressure on women. Symbols of the *pēraṇṭālu*, the virtuous wife with her husband still alive, exert pressure on women on behalf of an ideology of marital stability and female subordination in this society in which, in reality, there are considerable threats to marital stability and challenges to male dominance.

Notions about female character are sources for notions about the character of female deities. When they are dominated by a male deity, as is Gauri who is portrayed with her husband Siva, they are benevolent and conceived of as loving mothers. When they are undominated, as is the

consortless village goddesses, they are potentially malevolent. This malevolence derives from the notion of the danger which undominated women such as widows pose to society and to its categories of hierarchy. The potentially destructive, vindictive character of village goddesses makes worshiping them imperative and justifies the mobilisation of the entire village to re-enact an ideology which exalts the acceptance of hierarchy and the fulfilment of social obligations.

At the end of Chapter 2 we discussed certain ideal principles according to which village society is organised. We also pointed out rivalries, and tensions which threaten or contradict those principles. We then contended that it was through ritual and its component symbols that the ideal principles are repeatedly defined and reaffirmed. We now summarise our data supporting those contentions.

(i) THE PRINCIPLE OF ELDER HAVING AUTHORITY OVER YOUNGER

Elders have authority in life cycle rituals. They take precedence in naming ceremonies and have full control over their children's marriages. In general, elders exercise authority in the conduct of festivals and other ceremonials.

The role of ancestors also supports this principle. Respect is paid to ancestors every time a family conducts a *pūja* at its household shrine. Ancestors are identified with the successful completion of the harvest at the Sankranti festival. The well-being of the caste, which is associated with its traditional occupation, is also identified with the ancestors at Sankranti. The link between living elders and ancestors is made explicit through funerary rituals that are specifically phrased as a transition into the ranks of the ancestors.

(ii) THE PRINCIPLE OF THE AUTHORITY OF MALES OVER FEMALES

Males control most festivals and the decision-making required in connection with them.

Ritual symbols elaborate the concept that a widow, a woman not dominated by her husband, is in a negative, inauspicious state. This ideology of widowhood is created by symbolism which is pervasive and charged with widely ramifying cross-associations between rituals: in life cycle rituals, goddess festivals, the Gairamma festival, Sankranti, agricultural rituals, etc. Turmeric is a key symbol associated with the status of *pēraṇṭālu*, auspicious wife. As we have noted, a rationale for the need to subordinate women is that they have more *āśa* than men and are more emotional and attached to the world. This emotionalism in women is encouraged at funerals. It is built into beliefs about women turning into vengeful ghosts, *dayam*, and it is associated with the character of dissatisfied village goddesses.

Just as an 'undominated' woman is inauspicious, an unmarried man is not considered a fully adult member of society. A married couple is an interdependent unit. Women are indispensible for the performance of *pūja* at the household shrine. Women thus maintain the link of a man to his ancestors, just as they link him to his descendents by bearing offspring who will eventually worship him as an ancestor. Women are indispensible for drawing of *muggu* designs, part of the essential daily cleaning of a house and a fundamental element in the preparation of a site for a ritual. *Muggus* are mandatory at weddings, funerals (*karma* ceremonies), votive *pūjas* to village goddesses, rituals in village goddess festivals, and at Sankranti (at the household shrine, in front of the house, and for preparing the area for setting down the portable temple candelabrum).

(iii) The Principle That Kinsmen Share an Innate Connection and Mutual Responsibility

For households this is expressed through the household shrine, *dēvuḍu mūla*, which is involved in every ritual in which its members participate, from the whole range of life cycle rites to festivals celebrated by the entire village. For brothers, the principle is expressed when residential and property-sharing (or field-hut sharing) groups participate with each other in numerous festival rituals such as *Dīpāvaḷi*, *Nāgula Caviti*, as well as individual votive performances and private calendrical observances.

For sub-clans the principle is expressed through death pollution practices and marriage exogamy. Upon the death of one of their members, an entire sub-clan is restricted from doing any type of *pūja* whether at their household shrines or during a village goddess festival. This lasts for the entire period till the ceremony that installs the deceased among his or her ancestors in the household shrine (a period of eleven months for an adult). This sharing of death pollution is a feature that defines membership in a sub-clan, expressing their feeling of biological linkage to one another. This is one of the basic elements in the creation of the attitude that kinship bonds are innate, organic ties. Conventions for sharing or prohibiting marriage ties with other clans or sub-clans is another way in which sub-clans are defined. Fictive kin-terms are employed which support a division into exogamous 'brother' (*annatammulu*) and marriageable 'in-law' (*bāvamaridulu*) sub-clans. Though ideally these categories should apply at a clan level, in fact, there are cases of differences between sub-clans such as the Kalla clan. The possibility for the existence of differences between sub-clans arises from the notion that there is no organic, quasi-biological link between sub-clans in the same intense way that there is within sub-clans.

For clans, the principle is expressed through funerary 'sects' and exogamy. The division of the Gavara caste into adherents of two sets of

funerary customs, *pākrutoḷḷu* and *cakradārulu*, is along clan lines. The clan (*inṭipēru*, 'house name') is also the basic unit of exogamy. The name of the clan is considered to be the fundamental feature shared by all agnatically related kinsmen. By contrast, sub-clans do not bear names except in an informal sense of 'nicknames.'

(iv) The Principle That Castes are in a Hierarchical and Interdependent Relationship

Caste customs underpin notions of the hierarchical ranking of castes. Ideas about membership in ranked *varṇas*, differing dietary practices, differing customs concerning the control of women and notions of willingness to reciprocate or refuse food exchanges with other castes are all symbolic practices by which castes differentiate from each other and which work to create the belief that the castes really are hierarchically different. Such customs and their continuance are the justification for caste endogamy.

To be consistent with the principle in the economic sphere there should be an equation of superior castes with employers and inferior castes with employees. Thus we find that in ritual, a hierarchical economic model is emphasised and maintained while incompatible relationships are glossed over. Rituals feature, with the most prominent subservient ritual duties, those castes whose relationships with the Gavaras in the economic and political spheres are most incontenstably subordinate: Barbers, Washermen, Malas, and Madigas. In the rituals, the Gavaras are the providers of financial backing for festivals in which subordinate castes have ritual duties. Rituals feature Barbers and Washermen because of their long-term service relationships with the other castes of the village. The factors of long-term ties and the significant degree to which they are paid in kind make them the least ambiguously subordinate and most dependent castes. Malas and Madigas also feature prominently in rituals because they are so unquestionably inferior in status.

Despite their indisputably low status, Settigollu are less involved in ritual duties because their ties with other castes are not cemented in long-term bonds in the manner of the Barbers and Washermen. They are both less subservient in reality and less desirable models for intercaste relations. They do, however, play the ritual role of carrying the village goddess Ravalamma's horses in her festival and pay tribute to the Yatapalem Rama temple. Carpenters have long-term economic bonds of sub-servience to Gavaras but since they claim to be superior to them, they similarly do not participate in the festivals in a subservient role. Their interdependence with the other castes in the village is recognised, however, through their ritual prerogative of fashioning the wooden *patima* idols for the village

goddess festival. Castes superior to Gavaras in the food exchange hierarchy (Brahmans, Rajus and Komatis) but autonomous or inferior to them economically, remain notably peripheral in the major festivals and ritual activities. Castes which are equal in status to Gavaras but inferior to them economically such as Velamas and Kapus of Aripaka, also remain peripheral in major festivals and ritual activities.

To be consistent with the principle in the political sphere, superior castes should have authority over inferior castes. In ritual, a hierarchical political model is maintained and emphasised. Relations which are incompatible with this ideology are glossed over. During ritual ceremonies, Gavaras exercise authority over the proceedings and the conduct of the subordinate castes. They also determine the timing of the village goddess festival in which all castes and settlements participate. During the village goddess festival Yatapalem, the centre of Gavara population, is the hub of the ritual activities. Castes which are superior or equal to Gavaras in the traditional reckoning of food exchange or customs but inferior to them in power in local politics, remain significantly peripheral in the celebration of the all-village festivals. Numerous inferior castes acknowledge the political superiority of the Gavaras in their weddings during which delegations of caste heads go to make presentations to the Gavara Headman.

As for settlements within Aripaka Revenue Village their interdependence is ritually expressed in a number of ways. The major annual village goddess festivals unite all the settlements. The movements of the *ghaṭṭam* pots, in particular, symbolise this interdependence. The movements of the Rama temple candelabra also cement the symbolic interdependence of the settlements. Yatapalem's candelabrum goes to Kottapalem (to collect tribute money, the annual levy for the Yatapalem Rama temple) and also to Aripaka and Mallolla Pakalu on the occasion of the Aripaka and Ravalamma Tirtham fairs at the time of Sankranti. The temple candelabrum from Aripaka does not, however, go to Yatapalem. This fits in with the pattern of Aripaka attempting to avoid full reciprocal recognition of Gavara dominance without openly defying it.

The interdependence of neighbouring villages is also expressed through ritual. The movements and exchange visits of temple candelabra and *bhajana* groups in the season of fairs after Sankranti is a ritual expression of interdependence and cooperation with neighbouring villages. Note the prominent participation of Bangarampalem in Yatapalem's *tīrtham* at Sankranti and its villagers' prominent participation in the selling at the Aripaka weekly market.

RITUALS CONTROL OR UTILIZE MANIFEST DISCREPANCIES IN THE IDEAL CATEGORIES

Rituals deal with the insubordination of wives in the *vālakālu* skits which are performed as part of village goddess and Gairamma festivals. Similarly, operatic dramas deal with such problems and the rivalry of brothers and conflicts in loyalty between kinsmen, or between patrons. In this way, rituals incorporate manifest discrepancies in the ideals and utilize them to strengthen the relevance of the festival and its message of harmonious hierarchical interdependence. Beals, in a discussion of the significance of fairs (*jātra*) in Northern Karnataka, tells us that such fairs tend to occur in villages in which there are unsolvable structural tendencies towards conflict. Significantly, these are anomalies in hierarchy or interdependence: either conflicting castes of roughly equal status and power or conflicting clans within a caste. The fairs, then, like the aspects of village festivals under discussion here, offer a 'religious solution': "Where the desire or the ability to alter circumstances is lacking, circumstances can nevertheless be reinterpreted and redirected in such a way as to make it seem almost as if there had been no problem requiring a solution" (Beals 1964 : 113).

We can discern similar mechanisms at work in the notions about the character of village goddesses. The negative character of the undominated, or insubordinate, female is utilized by the ritual to infuse a powerful emotional reality to the danger and threat of the village goddess. This becomes the principal rationale for the imperative to mobilise the entire village to perform the festival to appease the goddess. The message of that festival then turns out to be an endorsement of the ideal forms of hierarchy and behaviour of respect and subordination.

THE USE OF RITUAL OCCASIONS AS TACTICAL WEAPONS IN COMPETITION

When ritual is used as a 'tactical weapon' in competition, at no time is the significance of the symbols themselves called into question. The incident of the duplication of the Gairamma festival in 1971 concerned rivalries between two conflicting authority structures, one based on seniority and the other on the new criteria of elective politics and education. It also was the result of the growing strength of the Malla clan in Mallolla Pakalu, who seem to have begun to perceive their economic and ritual interests as somewhat divergent from those of Yatapalem. This is understandable in the light of the fact that Yatapalem is numerically and politically dominated by other Gavara clans, Saragadam and Rapeti,

respectively. The hiatus in firm village leadership merely provided an opportunity for these latent rivalries to come to the surface and express themselves.

The Malla tactic of forming their own separate hamlet, 'to be closer to their fields,' had hitherto aided in defusing potential violations of the ideals of caste unity and interdependence. In the past it provided them with a rationale for performing a separate Gairamma festival. Conflict only arose when it became clear that they were holding their festival at the same time as Yatapalem, in overt violation of the ideal of interdependence. It is difficult to assess whether this was only a unique instance arising out of controversies over leadership or whether it was the beginning of a greater cleavage between the clans. It is hardly possible for the Mallas to drift very far from their fellow Gavaras in Yatapalem since they maintain extensive kinship ties with them and rely on Gavara solidarity to consolidate their own political position in Aripaka Revenue Village as a whole.

In the process of their rise in economic and political power in the village, the Gavaras could be said to have employed a number of ritual elements as 'tactical weapons.' Here again, the ritual symbols themselves have not been challenged. Rather, the issue involves the definition of a group and its importance. In building their new Rama temple in Yatapalem, the Gavaras have made a statement about the importance of their settlement as the spiritual centre of the Revenue Village. The financing of the building itself, an entirely Gavara enterprise, was a demonstration of the economic strength on which they base this claim.

Another aspect involved here is an upgrading of ritual style. The Gavaras not only built the new temple to impress the residents of Aripaka. They also felt a desire to use their money for more elaborate and suitable ritual performances for themselves. The construction of such a temple is an achievement of which they can be proud as a group and also expresses their feeling a need to honour Rama for the benevolence which he has so evidently bestowed upon them in the new cash crop economy.

No mention of the changes brought about for the Gavaras by the cash crop economy would be complete without a consideration of the Gavaras who have recently come to control the sugar-cane wholesale market in Anakapalli. The group which has influenced them are the Komati merchants with whom they competed to gain access and, later, equal control of the wholesale sugar-cane market. Following the lead of the Komatis, they have built a major temple in Anakapalli and a number of cultural institutions, a library and youth club, based on Komati prototypes. In 1961 a Gavara, Pedakamsetti Sitaramayya, published the *Gavara, Prācīna Caritra*, 'Early History of the Gavaras', in which he puts forth the

theory that Gavaras were originally a Vaisya caste. As part of his evidence he cites the frequency with which the names of Gavara clans, *iṇṭipēru*, are compounded with the suffix *seṭṭi*, a designation for 'merchants' in some regions of South India (though not in Visakhapatnam District). Such theories, however, have not taken hold. The Gavaras, while keen to perform rituals in a distinguished manner, have little interest in imitating what they regard as the peculiar customs of the Twice-Born castes. In particular, they see little reason for taking the impractical step of restricting the economic productivity of their women or of altering their diet.

The Gavaras got where they are today through their diligence as farmers and their drive for monetary success. It is unlikely that they will exchange their own self-reliant ethic for the tarnished image of the Twice-Born castes. If they are becoming 'Sanskritised', it is through the agency of Andhra-wide 'town culture' (cinemas, etc.), and this can hardly be considered a preserve of Brahmans.

IS RITUAL IDEOLOGY MERELY A REFLEX OF ACTUALITY?

So far we have discussed the relationship between the ideologies of tribute—hierarchy and interdependence—with the actualities of rivalries in society. While there is not a direct congruence between ideology and actually observed behaviour we can say that, for the most part, actual behaviour does follow a pattern of hierarchy. Where there are inconsistencies, ideology deals with these. We are then led to ask, to what extent does ideology determine social structure and vice versa.

This question is like asking 'does the idea of shared death-pollution create the sub-clan or does the existence of the sub-clan create the notion of shared death-pollution?' The sub-clan exists through a sense of distinctiveness which is accorded to it by symbols such as the shared restrictions of death pollution. But as we have seen, when the actual functioning of the group becomes unwieldy, they sever these symbolic ties and split into new sub-clan divisions. Thus, obviously people create or at least manipulate their symbols for expedience. The value of such symbols is that they raise the justification for group cohesion to a higher plane.[12] The concept of shared death-pollution creates the notion of an innate quasi-physical tie which articulates agnatic kinsmen.

Thus, the symbols themselves partake of the 'actual' situation but transform this into an idealised format, a paradigm of an ideal. The same process operates on the level of beliefs about the character of women, and beliefs about hierarchy found in the forms of *pūja*. We should expect that as actuality alters, as external changes and expediencies present themselves, modifying the nature, goals, and composition of interest groups, ideology

should be responsive and ready to reinterpret and to be moulded out of the new elements. If, for instance, in an urban context, sub-clans were to lose their relevance, their economic, political, or social importance, then we should expect the notion of death-pollution to alter as well, and perhaps apply only to the very closest of kinsmen.

The ideology of relationships with deities should thus arise from the nature of the society in which it occurs. Village society is structured along hierarchical lines, and emphasises certain symbolic messages in *pūja* related to subordination and respect. However, urban environments with their residents' experience of more egalitarian social structures tend to gravitate increasingly towards *bhakti* sects which largely ignore caste and place stress on an intimate devotional relationship with a deity rather than a strictly submissive respectful one. That such new types of social structure generate new religious responses is evident throughout urban India and have been demonstrated by Pocock for Gujarat (Pocock 1973 : 158ff). In modern cities where the hierarchy of caste plays little part, we witness the rise of individualistic egalitarian *bhakti* sects centred on *gurus*. However, as we have already noted, hierarchical structuring of social relations is still evident in non-caste bureaucratic structures. Hence, we can expect that much of the traditional ideology retains its relevance in the new circumstances.

The relationship between actuality and ideology is a complex and dynamic one. Ideology objectifies and perpetuates social structures in a society whose actual social relations it more or less legitimates. As we have seen in the present study, rituals and their symbols actively mould perceptions and behaviour to continue to strive towards a particular model of hierarchy and interdependence in which elder male Gavaras are at the centre. However, if new changes or shifts in economic or political power should occur, new symbols or new interpretations of the old symbols are bound to arise. It is one of the tasks of anthropology to refine our understanding of the dynamics of these changes. It is hoped that this work has contributed towards that end by elucidating the relationship between the two interacting variables of social relations and ideology in a village context.

NOTES

1. In 1977 I discovered that the Citturi family of Aripaka Komatis had refurbished the Aripaka Rama temple—its covered verandah (*maṇḍapam*) had been restored and reroofed and its interior had been repainted.

2. This festival is described in greater detail later in this chapter.

3. *Pārṭīlu*, 'factions', lit. 'parties.'

4. While only ten or fifteen close male relatives and clansmen participated in most funerary processions, around seventy-five attended the funeral of the Headman.

5. This was the same man who led the procession and chose the termite mound in the Pasuvula Maramma festival described in the last chapter.

6. Saragadam Appala Naidu often stated that his sub-clan of the Saragadam clan were the first Gavaras to settle in Yatapalem. He and another elderly relative also repeated a family legend linking them with the Raju-caste Vizianagaram Maharaja, a relationship possibly cited further to justify their ritual prerogatives. The story concerned Appala Naidu's great grandfather, Sanyasi Naidu, owner of much land in the area who once heard that the Vizianagaram Raja was encamping with his troops in the region of the modern town of Chodavaram. He invited the army to stay in Yatapalem for three days. They came and were handsomely feasted and entertained. Then the Raja told Sanyasi Naidu he could have anything he wanted. Sanyasi Naidu replied he wanted nothing more than the right to have immediate access to the Raja at his palace if he should ever visit him. The Raja agreed. An incident later took place in which a 'big man' had come to see the Raja but had been kept waiting for three days. At that point Sanyasi Naidu came to visit the Raja who, when he heard Sanyasi Naidu had come, rushed to his palace gate to greet him personally. This surprised and astounded the 'big man' who declared that Sanyasi Naidu must be an extraordinarily great man.

7. *Korrōḷḷu* or *kurravāḷḷu*.

8. Before that move took place there were 11 Malla households in Yatapalem whose combined wet land holdings were 23 acres, contrasted with 9 Malla households in Mallolla Pakalu with a combined total of 18 acres of wet lands. After the projected move there would be 6 Malla households remaining in Yatapalem with 11 acres of wet land and 14 Malla households in Mallolla Pakalu with a total of 30 acres of wet land.

9. On the penultimate day of the Ravalamma festival in 1972, sticks representing parrots and metal spearheads—in the custody of the Village Servant, the Mala *bārki*—were brought to Yatapalem in a canopied procession, supervised by Saragadam Appala Naidu that walked on saris honorifically placed down (within the precincts of the settlements of Aripaka and Yatapalem) so the processants did not have to touch the ground. A huge swing, made from two toddy palm tree logs, was raised in the square in front of the Yatapalem Rama temple, the first log being hoisted into place by Saragadam clansmen. Then the Saragadam clan did a *vāḷakam* ('skit') in which Saragadam Appala Naidu sang a song as Saragadam family members enacted ploughing with bullocks. The song, with the refrain '*mēlu, mēlu*' ('our happiness and good fortune') spoke of the goddess 'punishing cruel people, protecting good people,' promising that the Saragadam family will do *pūja* to her, bring horses and elephants, and carry her on a chariot to her temple. It also describes her as protecting cows, calves, children, and mothers. Another song, with the same refrain, described the agricultural cycle—the coming of the rains, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, winnowing and storing the grain in bins.

Next a Barber lay on a bed holding the parrots and concealed by a cloth. He imitated the parrots' cry, '*kī kī*', as they came to steal rice offerings intended for the goddess. An elephant (a Surisetti clansman in a covered frame with a papier mâché elephant head) and two brass horses (carried by Settigollu of Yatapalem and Kottapalem) charged forward and back and then forward again to chase the parrots away. In the final *vālakam* the Vadram *pujāri* impersonated the ghost (*bhūtam*) Yernamma, carrying a pot with a fire inside and holes poked in its sides. Village Barbers held bows and arrows with wicks that were set on fire, and chased Yernamma from the settlement.

10. The purported connection of Saragadam Appala Naidu's ancestor with the Vizianagaram Maharaja is echoed in parallels between the Ravalamma festival and a 'village goddess festival' performed annually in Vizianagaram town under the patronage of the current Vizianagaram Maharaja. I observed part of this festival, the Paidimamba Panduga, in mid-October 1970 on a Tuesday (the goddess' day) and a Wednesday (the full moon day in the waxing fortnight of Asvayuja month). Present in a procession were a group of Kapus on a bullock cart rigged up as a mock elephant, a chariot made of bullock carts (with a structure made of a rice mortar and yokes on which sat men dressed as women). These went back and forth on the main street in a manner similar to the elephant and horses in the Ravalamma festival. Other features of the Paidimamba festival were a huge swing outside the temple, Harijan drummers, a parade of dancers dressed as tigers, a contingent of fishermen (Jalaris) carrying umbrellas fashioned from fishing nets, and a cart with a tall pole on the top of which a man was seated. *Ghaṭṭam* pots also featured prominently in the offerings to the goddess.

11. On subsequent visits to the village in 1977 and 1978 I found the Headman still in his job.

12. This is called objectification by Cohen (1974 : 30).

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APPENDIX I

ADDITIONAL CASTE-RANKING DESCRIPTIONS

Kapus, one of the farmer castes of the village, concede superiority only to the three castes—Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis. They consider the other three farmer castes of the village to be their equals and all the remaining castes to be their inferiors. They accept food from the Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis, Gavaras, and Velamas, though they do not accept food from any of the remaining castes.

Kapus are considered inferiors and their food is refused by Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis, Kamsalis, Jangams, and Velamas. Gavaras say Kapus are inferior to them, though some say they would take food prepared by Kapus. While Pedda Kapus say Kapus are their equals, Pedda Kapus say they do not accept food prepared by Kapus. Telukulas say that Kapus are their equals and that they would accept food from them. The remaining castes all concede the superiority of the Kapus and say they would accept food prepared by them.

Pedda Kapus, a farming caste, recognize the superiority of only two castes, the Brahmans and the Rajus. They consider the other three farmer castes (Gavara, Kapu, and Velama) to be their equals. They consider all the remaining castes to be inferior, and their food unacceptable. Food prepared by Gavaras and Velamas is acceptable to them, though food prepared by Kapus is not (though they view all three to be their equals). Jangams are considered to be inferior, though their food is acceptable.

Pedda Kapus (of whom there are only two households in the village) are considered to be inferior by Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis, Kamsalis, and Jangams. All of those castes also refuse food prepared by Pedda Kapus. Pedda Kapus are considered to be equals by Gavaras, Kapus, and Telukulas (though Pedda Kapus say they are unequivocally superior to Telukulas). Gavaras and Kapus refuse Pedda Kapu food, however. (Data concerning Velamas' views of Pedda Kapus are not available.) Those who

say they would accept food from Pedda Kapus are Telukulas and all the remaining castes.

Velamas, a major caste of farmers in the region, say that only Brahmans, Rajus, and Komatis are superior to them, while Gavaras are their equals. They accept food from all of these castes. (Data on Pedda Kapus are not available.) Some said they would accept food from Jangams as well (though they considered Jangams to be inferior.) They consider all the remaining castes as inferior and their food unacceptable.

Except for a claim by Telukulas that they are equal to Velamas, the views of other castes towards Velamas resemble their views of Gavaras: Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis, Kamsalis and Jangams consider them inferior and their food unacceptable. Gavaras and Kapus consider them to be equal and accept their food. All the remaining castes (Sali, Vadram, Mangali, Cakali, Settigollu, Mala, and Madiga) consider them superior and accept their food.

Telukulas, oil pressers, consider only three castes to be superior to themselves: Brahmans, Rajus, and Gavaras. They say that Jangams, Kapus, Pedda Kapus, and Velamas are their equals. They consider the remaining castes (including Komatis, Kamsalis, Sali, Vadram, Mangali, Cakali, Settigollu, Mala, and Madiga) to be inferior. Their willingness to accept food from other castes reveals a pattern that does not seem to coincide with their claims to superiority (if one takes willingness to accept food from another caste as an open admission of a non-superior position). Telukulas say they will accept food from all castes whom they say are superior to them, from those whom they say are equal to them, and also from the Komatis whom they say are inferior to them.

Telukulas are considered inferior by nine castes (Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis, Kamsalis, Jangams, Gavaras, Kapus, Pedda Kapus, Velamas). Settigollu claimed to be equals of the Telukulas, while seven castes (Sali, Vadram, Mangali, Cakali, Settigollu, Mala, Madiga) consider the Telukulas to be superior to themselves. Only those castes which consider themselves inferior or equal to Telukulas say they would accept food from them, though there is some difference of opinion whether the Vadrams would or not.

Sali, landless labourers (formerly weavers), say they are superior to seven castes whose food they claim they would refuse if offered. There are conflicting opinions on the Komatis whom some Salis would include with those seven castes to make eight. They say the Jangams are not their superiors but are equals and that they would accept food from Jan-

gams. Salis concede to being inferior to seven castes: Brahmans, Rajus, Gavaras, Kapus, Pedda Kapus, Velamas, and Telukulas.

Salis are considered inferior by ten castes who also do not accept food from them (Brahmans, Rajus, Komatis, Kamsalis, Jangams, Gavaras, Pedda Kapus, Velamas, and Telukulas). In addition, two castes consider Salis to be equal to them though they refuse to accept food from Salis (Vadrams, Settigollu). Only four castes concede to being inferior to Salis (Mangalis, Cakalis, Malas, and Madigas).

Vaḍram (of whom there is only one household in Yatapalem), landless labourers and village goddess *pūjāris*, claim to be superior to only six castes in the village (Kamsalis, Mangalis, Cakalis, Settigollu, Malas, and Madigas) whose food they say they would reject if they were offered it. They claim to be equal to Salis though they refuse Sali food. There is some uncertainty whether they would accept food from Telukulas whom they admit to be their superiors.

Only the two castes of Malas and Madigas say they consider Vadrams as superiors or accept their food. Mangalis, Cakalis, and Settigollu say the Vadrams are equal in status to themselves but that they would not accept food from Vadrams.

GLOSSARY

Acintalu (*akṣintalu*). 'Yellow rice', raw husked rice which has been stained yellow with auspicious turmeric paste.

Annatammulu. Brothers (derived from *anna*, elder brother, and *tammuḍu*, younger brother); term referring to unmarriageable relations between clans (*see* p. 35).

Āśa. Worldly attachment, passion, desire, emotion, love, hope, lust.

Bahula. Waning fortnight of a lunar month. *See* discussion on p. 112.

Bālapēranṭālu (*bāla*, young; *pēranṭālu*, auspicious woman). Unmarried female child, unmarried virgin—considered to be auspicious. *Bālapēranṭālu* who die are sometimes worshipped.

Bārki. Village servant (of the Mala caste) who serves the village Headman and village Record Keeper.

Bāsikam. A string with a cloth pad attached to it, tied on to the forehead of a bride or a groom during a wedding ceremony.

Bāvamaridulu. Brothers in law; term referring to marriageable relations between clans (*see* p. 35).

Bhajana. Religious song or session of singing religious hymns.

Bhajana ceṭṭu (*bhajana*, religious hymn; *ceṭṭu*, tree). Multibranched brass candelabrum belonging to a village Rama temple.

Bhakti. Devotion; devotional.

Bhaṭṭuḍu. Person habitually possessed by a village goddess.

Bomma. Image, idol, doll, picture.

Boṭṭu. Auspicious dot or mark—formed with red powder (vermillion), often on a yellow turmeric background—used in the performance of *pūja* or applied to a worshipper as a token of having performed *pūja.* (Known elsewhere in India as a *tilak*.)

Cakradārulu. Those who follow a set of funerary rituals in which non-Brahman, Vaishnavulu act as *pūjāris.*

Caste (*jāti*; *kulam*). An endogamous group of people sharing similar status and often similar occupations, and practice similar customs

(especially with regard to diet and willingness to engage in food exchanges with members of other castes).

Caviti. The fourth and least auspicious day in the lunar fortnight.

Clan (*inṭipēru*). A named patrilineal descent group, whose members do not all necessarily recall the ties linking them together.

Classificatory kinship. A classificatory use of a kinship term means applying a term to a broader range than just immediate kinsmen—a son of one's father's brother (uncle) is called 'brother', with no terminological distinction from one's actual sibling by one's own father.

Cooperative sugar mills. Aripaka Revenue Village residents have shares in one located in Govada village just southeast of Chodavaram town. Another large mill in the region is in Thummapala village, just north of Anakapalli town.

Cross cousins. *See* under 'Parallel cousins'.

Dānam. Gift giving that is virtuous and that gains merit for the giver.

Daṇḍam. (Synonymous with *namaskāram*, though not used frequently as a term of greeting). It means salute, homage, or bow and refers to a prayerful hand gesture with the palms pressed together and the fingertips pointed upward.

Darśanam. Viewing and being in the presence of (a deity, powerful person, beneficial politician, or an auspicious individual such as a married woman with her husband still alive or a religious preceptor).

Dēvata. Goddess of the village goddess variety (more localised and vindictive than a *dēvi*; also without a husband as a male consort); *grāmadēvata* (*grāma*, village).

Dēvi. Goddess more consistently benevolent than a *dēvata*, usually associated with a scriptural tradition, and usually having a husband for a consort.

Dēvuḍu. God, deity.

Dēvuḍu mūla (god corner). Household shrine, always found in the northeast corner (north corner of the east wall).

Dharmam (*dharma*). Charitable, righteous behaviour between people.

Diṣṭi. Negative influence (evil eye) caused by envy and jealousy and transmitted along lines of sight; things affected by it spoil.

Diṣṭi bomma. Figurine or object intended to attract evil eye, thereby diverting it from doing harm to valued things or persons (*see* discussion on p. 110).

Ēkādaśī (*ēkāsi*). The eleventh day in a lunar fortnight, considered the most auspicious (*see* also p. 115-n. 15).

Endogamy. The custom of marrying within a particular group.

Exogamy. The custom of taking a wife from outside of one's own clan or group.

Gangireḍlu. Itinerant entertainers who take decorated trained bulls around (for fortune telling) and play a shenai-like horn. Their bulls are decorated with *bāsikam* pads and strings that have been used in weddings.

Ghaṭṭam. Black ceramic or brass pot of the kind used to fetch well water (specially decorated with whitewash, vermillion dots, and a turmeric stripe when used in village goddess festivals).

Graha. A planet; a constellation; the Sun, Moon, and seven planets—the heavenly bodies that appear to move in the sky—known as the nine planets (*navagrahalu*), which each exert benevolent or malevolent influences; a spirit, a devil.

Grāma dēvata panṇduga. Village goddess festival.

Grāma śānti. Ceremony of protecting a village from malevolent forces, exorcism of a village.

Guggilam. Incense with a strong odour; gum bdellium or *Balsamodendron Mukul*, Hooker. Contrasts with the sweet-smelling incense known as *sāmbrāṇī*.

Hārati. A waved camphor flame (a piece of camphor is lit and waved in a circular motion on a plate or in a holder).

Ijamāni (*Yajamāni*). Household head; head of a caste in a village.

Illarakam. Uxorilocal marriage in which the husband goes to live with the wife's family.

Inṭipēru. Non-localised descent group with patrilineally inherited name (*inṭipēru* literally means 'house name'); this is the entity referred to in this book as a clan.

Jaggery. A sort of country sugar (*gur* in Hindi) made by boiling down sugar-cane juice into a thick tan liquid that solidifies upon cooling.

Jāti. See under 'caste.'

Kallam. A cluster of cattle sheds and possibly jaggery ovens of several households, out in the fields.

Kankanam. A thread, with a rolled up leaf attached to it, which is tied on to the wrist of a bride, a groom, or other objects during a wedding.

Karṇam. Village Record Keeper who maintains landownership and tax assessment records.

Kārte. Period of 13½ days during which the Sun is in one of 27 named constellations during the course of a year. Each *kārte* is called by the name of its constellation.

Kaṭṇam. Fees, dues, gifts, contributions, presents; used to describe contributions by relatives and friends at weddings as well as payments to service castes for their participation in rituals.

Kumkum (*kumkuma*). Bright red powder known as vermillion.

Kuncam. A measure of volume, approximately 4 litres.

Lingam. In the context of the god Siva—an upright cylindrical form representing the phallus, which serves as a temple idol; in other contexts—a mark, sign, emblem. symptom, token, element, or principle (Brown 1966: 904-905).

Maila. Dirt (in general); ritual pollution from menstruation or death. (Birth pollution has a separate term, *puruḍu.*)

Malla (*maḷḷa*). The name of a Gavara clan (*see* also '*inṭipēru*').

Mangaḷam. A ceremony of auspiciousness, often combining a song with the word *mangaḷam* and the waving of a camphor flame (*hārati*)—an act referred to as *mangaḷahārati*—often coming at the end of a larger ceremony.

Maṇḍapam. Covered verandah or roofed, columned, open platform in front of a temple.

Mangaḷasūtram (also *settimānam* or *tāli*). Wedding locket, an indicator of a woman's married status.

Mantram. Formula of words or syllables, considered to be innately efficacious.

Mariyāda. Behaviour showing proper respect, honour, civility, decency; proper decorum.

Mēlukolupu (waking up). The morning procession of *bhajana* singers collecting money for the Rama temple during the pre-Sankranti season.

Muggu. Auspicious pattern or diagram drawn in white powder on freshly cleaned ground.

Muhūrtam. Astrologically auspicious moment. (What is an auspicious time for one kind of activity is not necessarily auspicious for another.)

Mokku. Vow or promise to a deity to perform particular rituals in his or her honour if cures or other benefits are bestowed.

Mokkubaḍi. Fulfilment of a vow.

Munsif (or *munasabu*). Village Headman who is part of the government tax collection administration (of a taluk), as well as a census reporter and judicial authority.

Naiḍu. Headman, chief; also a title forming part of a name.

Naivēdyam. Offerings presented in a *pūja*, which can include food or a waved camphor flame (*hārati*).

Namaskāram. A term of greeting derived from the Sanskrit words associated with bowing and making oneself low.

Naṣṭam. Misfortune, e.g. of the kind caused by a birth, first menstruation, or death occurring at an inauspicious time.

Nelaganṭa (*nela,* month; *ganṭa,* bell). The month, preceding Sankranti, during which rice is harvested and a bell is rung at the Rama temple.

Pākrutoḷḷu. Those who follow a set of funerary rituals in which Jangams act as *pūjāris.*

Pālēru. Annual-basis field hand.

Parallel cousins. Cousins related via parents who are of the same sex (e.g. father's brother's children or mother's sister's children). These contrast with cross cousins—cousins related via parents who are of the opposite sex (e.g. father's sister's children or mother's brother's children).

Pasupu. Turmeric.

Patima (pl., *patimalu*). Idol (term used to refer to carved wooden idol used in village goddess festival).

Peddalu (sing., *pedda,* big, big one). Elders, big men, superiors, ancestors (patrilineal ancestors of the male household head).

Pēranṭālu. An auspicious woman—a married woman whose husband is still alive. (A husband's longevity is considered to be linked to his wife's devotion and loyalty to him.) Synonymns are: *pativrata,* husband devoted; and *puṇyastrī,* meritorious woman. (*See* also '*bālapēranṭālu*'.)

Pīnu (or *peṇḍli pīnu*). (Among Gavaras) a yantra-like diagram inscribed in the ground, upon which a bride and groom sit during most of the wedding ritual.

Prasādam. Items received back by a worshipper after having been offered to a deity—containing and transmitting auspicious influence.

Pūja. Worship; a principal ceremonial activity; a form of symbolic tribute; respect, obeisance, homage, veneration. (*See* discussion on pp. 97-107.)

Pūjāri. Ritual officiant, person who customarily conducts worship.

Puṇyam. Religious merit.

Rapeti (*rāpēṭi*). The name of a Gavara clan. (*See* also *inṭipēru.*)

Samānam. Equal (in status).

Sāmbrāṇi. Type of incense made from a fragrant gum, benzoin.

Sankranti (*sankranti* or *sankramānam*). The day on which the Sun enters a new zodiacal constellation (there are 12 a year); term used for festival season in January (the Capricorn Sankranti) and the actual Sankranti day (usually January 14).

Sanskritic deities. Deities served by Brahman priests and about which there is written literature.

Santarpaṇam (lit., satisfying, gratifying). Refers to the act of feeding the poor or dependent castes; such charity is a means of generating merit (*puṇyam*) which influences deities to act favourably on one's behalf.

Śānti. An activity to placate malevolent influences, involving placatory prayers, offerings, or the fulfilment of a 'curse' through a legal fiction.

Saragadam (*śaragaḍam*). The name of a Gavara clan. (*See* also '*Inṭipēru*'.)

Seer. A measure of volume, approximately 1 litre. (Four seers equal one *kuncam*.)

Sub-clan. A patrilineal lineage segment whose members remember and purportedly can trace their relationship to each other. (Note: they are not assumed necessarily to be traceably related to those sharing the same clan name.)

Suddha. Waxing fortnight of a lunar month. *See* discussion on p. 112.

Tagu (or *taguvu*). A dispute or the meeting to settle a dispute.

Tāluk (*tāluka*). Subdivision of a district, usually having a headquarters in an important town.

Tīrtham. A village fair in the Sankranti season; the liquid which has been consecrated by being used to bathe a deity and is offered to a worshipper to drink or place upon his head—a form of *prasādam*.

Tithi. One day in a lunar month (does not necessarily correspond or coincide with one solar day).

Tulasi. The aromatic sweet basil plant, considered auspicious and sometimes worshipped by auspicious women (*pēranṭālu*).

Upanayanam. Ceremony of investiture of males during which they receive the sacred thread (*jandhyam*) worn by the so-called Twice-Born castes and others claiming such status.

Ūru kaṭṭaḍam. Ceremony of barring the entry into a village of malevolent forces; village exorcism.

Uxorilocal marriage. (*See* under '*Illarakam*'.)

Varṇa (*varṇam*). A category of hierarchical status that overarches particular endogamous caste groups. There are four *varnas*: (in descending order) Brahmans (priests); Kshatriyas (warriors); Vaisyas (businessmen); and Shudras (the rest of the population, except for those formerly considered beyond the pale—now called Harijans). The term also referes to: colour, hue, tint; a tribe, a class, a caste, an order; a letter of the alphabet.

Widow (*vedava*). An inauspicious status—a widow is considered to be responsible for her husband's death, through her disloyalty and lack of devotion.

Yantram. Intrinsically powerful diagram. (According to Brown 1966: 857—a contrivance, a machine, implement, instrument, apparatus; a diagram or figure of a mystical nature; an astrological character; a talisman or amulet.)

Yellow rice. *See* under '*Acintalu*'.

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